

**Three sections to this in-depth questionnaire – before, during, and after the concert held on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 at Club Inégaies as part of Women in Musical Leadership conference, performance evening.**

**There is a colour coding to clarify which of the following three commentator groups are writing.**

**BLUE:** The responses have been collated and woven into reflections by Jenni Roditi.

**PURPLE:** There are additional commentaries from TIC singers, Marcia Willis and Veronica Chacon.

**GREEN:** Alistair Smith, TIC blogger and poet adds his thoughts and poetry as well.

## **SECTION A [BEFORE THE CONCERT]**

A1 How did you find out about this evening's concert?

**4 FB, 4 conference, 2 friends, 2 random, 2 undeclared. = 14**

**JR Commentary**

**Glad there was a balance of general public and conference 4:4 for the purposes of the Q is good, plus a few friends and random people.**

**Comment from Marcia Willis, one of the performers in the concert, on reading the questionnaire and responding. April 7<sup>th</sup> 2019.**

**Marcia Willis: General comment: Being asked to complete the questionnaire before the start shifted the listening frame for the audience from what it would have been in a standard concert. It is possible that some responses, including that from the most critical and analytical respondent, would have been different otherwise.**

A2 What in particular made you decide to come?

**JR Commentary**

**Those *not* coming from the associated conference declared an interest in new approaches to singing for various reasons: viz: 'improvised singing and performance', 'vocals', 'the idea of it and improvised singing', 'researching Latin American singing, and new approaches to voice,'. Conference attendees declared 'amazing keynote' speech as a reason, interest in 'distributed improvisation' and 'breadth of work with voice' as well as due to 'International Women's Day and general interest in understanding 'jazz' and general 'curiosity'.**

**Good to discover that a 'general public' audience latches on to what one could broadly call 'new approaches to voice and singing'. The conference audience were more precise and also localised in their reasons for attending. The concert being part of the conference, gave them added reason to attend. A term like 'distributed improvisation' for example is a term not even I've come across, suggesting an academic reading, which is helpful – and in fact a term I may use from now on.**

A3 If this is your first experience of TIC, do (did) you have a hunch about what the music would be like? If so, is there a style or an artist that you imagined this might resemble?

**JR Commentary**

**Not much data here – but I would say Circle Singing is the closest known reference to what we do, but still quite far off what TIC are about. Circle singing puts a leader in the**

middle of the circle. That leader is the musical wizard – allocating lines, rhythms and harmonies to all those in the circle around him/her. In other words, all the creativity comes mainly from the one person in the middle. There are opportunities for individuals to add extra materials and to solo, but the leader is generating a lot more style and content than the role of conductor in TIC (I would say), whose role is more to let the essence materials come from the choir, with some basic guidance and generalised starting points, for example a signal, a tempo or an atmosphere, like a breath, a meter, a title or a singer from the choir as protagonist.

A Capella takes its reference from Renaissance style of singing, eg Gregorian chant, meaning unaccompanied or "in the manner of the chapel" which is opposed to Cantata, with instrumental accompaniment. This a very conventional, classical reference point though also used in popular music for unaccompanied singing as well. But lacks any reference to improvisation, which at least circle singing has, as the leader is improvising his/her ideas, however, genre-referenced they are.

‘Voices from different cultures and languages’ is a very good guess... but not with an understanding of the method or process of the performance, which to my mind should be more of a publicised feature of the performance. The approach itself is half the fun! This hasn’t been clearly enough presented in the publicity that this is how the music will be presented. How to make ‘conducted improvisation’ sound sexy is a bridge I have not yet crossed - but going back to ‘distributed improvisation’ – this may be a useful term offering more leverage. The open-minded comment ‘it seems like it could be quite unique’ is followed up in later questions with the most negative answers from her of all participants. It’s as if she had some kind of strongly imagined hope for the concert... but we mainly let her down, when it came to the realisation of that hope, as demonstrated in her later comments.

Marcia Willis (TIC singer) adds: I think of the process of music-making in TIC as co-created by the singers and Jenni, with Jenni shaping it in the moment. There is variation on the standard circle-singing format (called “shared leadership circle-singing”) where one person sets up the circle song, solos, then removes one or 2 parts before re-joining the circle at which point the next person steps in to replace the silenced parts with new ones, solos, steps back into the circle etc. So eventually each person has had an opportunity to reshape the form, using some elements of what went before.

## **SECTION B [DURING THE CONCERT]**

### **BEFORE THE INTERVAL**

#### **B8 STEM**

##### **JR Commentary**

Generally, this piece was a great opener for the concert – bringing people into a place of warm, heart-felt relaxation, beauty and power with hints of other cultures and worlds: Bulgarian, African, ‘tribal’, ‘hot open plains’ and ‘ancient circles’. There was also an emotional content that brought up feelings of ‘melancholy with hope’, touching sadness’, ‘eroticism and earthiness’. Other comments were more connected with the musical content itself; ‘beautiful blends and harmonies’, ‘Bulgarian folk music harmonically’ – and one reference to the sound being cinematic... the film running behind the music was mentioned by one as ‘a bit cliché’.

##### **Alistair Smith Blog**

An inaugural declamatory phrase was delivered, which the choir answered in echo and a theme evolved. Beneath, a bass pulse nudged in generous nurture. The collective voices wound around the theme, revolving around its core, wreathing it in voluptuous veneers of harmony. Multiple ethnicities of

indeterminate origin chanted their inventions of nascent traditions. They met in greeting and in complete consensus; agreeing without sameness, equality without conformity.

## **B9 BIRD**

### **JR Commentary**

Overall, the invocation of the birds was well received – as it was done subtly and was convincing – ‘field recording’, ‘very realistic nature sounds’ and ‘waterfalls, wind and a forest’ comments attest to that. Not all liked the birds however, with one comment saying it was ‘a bit pointless’. The musical atmosphere was perceived as ‘disturbing, sombre, majestic, arch’ with a ‘beautiful ambivalence’ between ‘text/lyricism and dissonance’. The word beauty comes in several times in context of ‘disturbing’, yet ‘still beautiful’, ‘beautiful ambivalence’, ‘Dilara read beautifully’ and ‘I responded to the beauty of the sounds more than the content of the poem’ and ‘we’re here, beauty, being new’. Comments about the derived meaning of the music were also offered: ‘The poem – empathising with the human condition as spoken from Dilara’s soul, touched me deeply’, ‘nature speaking to us, trying so hard to be heard by humans’. Film music was also referenced by one, as in the previous piece STEM, – and the notion of a hymn/chorale with the word *arch* – meaning perhaps ‘mischievous and sly’ also suggested something sombre weaving with a slight ironic edge possibly.

### **Alistair Smith Blog**

#### **BIRD**

Birds call, and we descend to a drone. Upon which a wall is made, vowels are laid with mortar of consonant cohesion. Ululation rises, climbs and falls whilst words sing and speak. Intensity builds, collectively then subsides... words continue.

A chorus unfolds from a question of “what the dawn birds sing”? And another wall is laid, curving its way among the pieces on the board: A stage of players, under the branches, where the birds return and sing the song to sleep.

## **B10 HUSK**

### **JR Commentary**

This piece is formed from an edit that was done in the mixing process. The second half, starting with the glissando from Veronica, where references are made to ‘wild breakthro’, MENTAL, yells and shouts – happy ones, sci-fi, chaotic, disturbed, frantic..’ did follow the ‘slow, elemental’ opening but in the edit we cut off this section, and turned the remainder of this part of the music into a separate track called SAP, which we didn’t perform this evening. The two parts of the piece DID follow one another in the recording studio, but we shortened the second ‘frantic’ section... did it work in the live version? The comments indicate yes... it was accepted as a ‘wild breakthrough and liberation’, ‘permission to be totally free’ ‘Europeanised tribal sounds’ and the yells and shouts were ‘happy ones’ and the fact that it ‘becomes frantic’ was ‘impressive’. One person found it ‘chaotic and disturbed’ however. The first half which was led by Marcia’s voice was ‘incredible, transporting, warm, nostalgic, contained, elemental, very earthy, Gregorian, soothing, stimulating.’ More ‘meaning’ centred comments of the overall music suggested ‘ancient and modern sounds co-existed’ ‘The forces rise, powerful. Are they for good or for harm? They cannot be resisted. We follow for better or worse’ – suggesting a powerful ambivalence that was irresistible, a ‘Quest of the soul’ suggests the listener was completely immersed in the content, and once again another mention of a film score. The vowels sung ‘ha he ho he’ suggested the word ‘home’ to one listener.

### **Alistair Smith poetry**

#### **HUSK**

*Rise and fall  
in ancient organum  
waves of breath*

*An Abbess intones  
the colours of the overtones  
toned over  
Drawn out  
and revealed from within*

*A sonic temple  
Walls defined  
by pure acoustic space*

*Cracked open*

*Animal instincts  
break out  
and riot against the sacred  
Profanity exploding briefly  
Before placation  
and back  
into the reverence of silence*

## **B11 BUD**

### **JR Commentary**

This was a more light hearted number and some found it superficial, with comments such as ‘ monkey sounds, cacophony, jazzy chipmunks and a bit bored’; while others enjoyed the lightness mentioning words such as ‘ super fun, made me happy, laugh, makes me realise so much more is possible with the voice, cheeky, “I am what I am – so there!”’, Tribal beatbox, Veronica brought an incredible richness of characters to the rhythm’ and ‘playfulness, childlike joyousness, daring, mocking, free, unbound, like a pop or hip hop theme but having fun with sound patterns.’

Given some people found it a bit meaningless and others enjoyed the playfulness of it, one is left wondering if light-hearted pieces are more of a risk than I would have thought. On the recording Bud is a great relief to my ear after the sequence of pieces before it – ie Stem, Bird, Husk. Bud arrives and one is really ready for some fun by this point. Interesting that we didn’t convince everyone in the audience of this, despite following the same sequence as the recording, but I don’t think we did the piece full justice and I would say the recording was better. As Asier pointed out – my vocal line was rather lost as I was not facing the audience -whereas in the recording it features much more and in fact drives the music much more strongly. This didn’t quite happen in the live performance, partly because of my position and my mic’ing and partly because the tuning wasn’t quite stable. So I would have to agree with Q12 it was perhaps a bit ‘ouch’.

### **Alistair Smith poetry on**

#### **BUD**

##### *Ideas*

*tight little buds  
born of hidden seeds  
are teased to open*

*stretching stems  
emergent roots entwine  
into an undergrowth*

*interlaced  
holding each other  
A dialogue of limbs*

*Becoming intricate  
Weaving into a carpet  
of uniformity*

*and settling into appearance  
of organic coherence*

## **B12 PLOUGH**

### **JR Commentary**

I think overall this piece came across more readily than I was expecting. I thought it might offend some people and take them way out of their tolerance zone. But actually, with one exception this was not the case. People accepted the intense language and found references that were not only from nature and other civilisations, ‘a furrow of breath’, ‘unsettling, tribal, ritual, pre-logical, hunting, predator, animal’ but also from modern politics, psychology and social media ‘reminds me of politics and social media’. It had a feeling of strongly held convictions mixed with fury and frustration. ‘Individuation of different personalities’ suggests something pre-verbal moving into consciousness. The voice work attracted attention of itself in comments such as ‘This makes me really look at the mouth!’ and ‘Stretching the voice beyond its limits’. People stayed with it, apart from our one objector who now says ‘How does this make my life and my struggle with my own human condition better? Is this song for you all alone?’ – seemingly missing the potential for catharsis, or compassion for the human condition under such duress. She must have felt deep disdain for this piece and for something about the project to have written this. Why she would feel such disdain is not my remit to know but I can learn from it that yes, my original worry that this piece would offend some, did in fact bear out.

### **Alistair Smith Poetry on**

## **PLOUGH**

*Sigh  
Breath  
and exhale*

*Expel!*

*Revel in the expelling  
and the visceral  
salivation of air expulsion*

*Wail  
Between song and scream  
“Man” & “Beast”  
Tribal rotations  
anchor  
gathered in revolutions  
of circular volitions*

## **B13 SOW**

### **JR Commentary**

This was originally with Rou on the high voice part. Kate stepped in with very little instruction from me in the afternoon rehearsal. I mentioned the idea ‘casting a magical spell while sowing in the field, enchanting, with super high voice,’.. creating the appropriate mood and soaring height. This was almost unanimously received by the audience, with comments ‘freedom, Terry Riley soul-sound. Fascinating beating in ear drum from such close harmony’, ‘Joyful, ecstatic soul of the sower, imagining and feeling the growth being planted, then growth to maturity, stature.’, ‘almost like a sci-fi landscape. Very impressive high range’, ‘Hypnotic heights... Mystical’, ‘excellent whistle tones’, ‘a marching band following a muse’. However, the outlier was not impressed and cynical ‘gimmicky – I’m not sure you’ve got anything else to say’. One other mentioned ‘over repetitive main motive’. The end shift to the fast section was mentioned in reference to the ending as ‘very elegant’ and ‘women’s voices at the end suddenly beautiful, haunting,’ ‘Nicely constructed, errie harmonies at end’.

Not forgetting that the title was created AFTER the piece was originally improvised in the studio for the recording, the title I allocated SOW, was not only appropriate it was additionally evocative for the audience.

I'm recognising that no matter that the main motive was a bit repetitive (which I agree was maybe the case) the strong atmosphere created, on the level of the intention behind the piece, carried very well and that some almost over-simplicity, can be useful to create a needed space for the virtuosity of a soloist (here Kate) to be thoroughly free to shine, impress and conjure magic. We could of course develop more layers to the supporting textures should we do this again. But the magic was there for most listeners, either in the main section or in the faster ending section. So overall we created some strong content from an almost totally insubstantial opening motive *Hoooo wa Hooo..* on a G# drone. Something in the quality of the motive conjured Rou's original improvisation, as well as my instruction to her to improvise 'in your stratospheric high voice.' I had spotted this when she was improvising at the Vortex Jazz Club. Having never worked with her before the recording session, I was going on trust that what I heard of her that night (including her Mauritian influenced chest voice melodic material, used in STEM) would be an asset to the choir. It absolutely was and is.

### Alistair Smith poetry on

SOW

*Yawning and unison  
shaped mouths  
sculpt a drone  
into an envelope of tones*

*At altitude she soars,  
swoons and glides  
in effortless increments  
ascending*

*Focusing an energy  
up my spine  
towards a higher mind*

*Rhythm becomes multiplied  
and subdivides*

*Sweet intervals are held - sustained  
Until only they remain  
Holding and enfolding each other  
in concertina folds*

### **OPEN FORM 1**

#### **JR Commentary**

Feeling a need to not leave the audience without an unprepared piece I decided to add an 'open form' piece which was unprepared, relying on my signals, and of course the inventiveness of the artists. I was sensing that the audience was not quite as lively and engaged by our performance thus far, as was usual in our other performances. There is usually a feeling of electricity in the room. This was not so apparent during the first half of the concert to my mind. This must be because we were recreating previous pieces, not inventing new material. There was new material within the recreated pieces, but it wasn't 'on the edge' it was more like an additional richness only.

This unprepared piece did provide that missing ingredient, at least for some of the audience: 'Amazing, raw, surprising, wanted to capture each performer/actor on video so I could replay it', 'we can have fun anyway – and support each other', 'Always a lot of warmth', 'stunning', 'throughout I sensed something? Arabic? Mediterranean? some quality', 'constructivism, search for order, dawn of society, ruling oneself, towards civilisation, desire to cooperate, productivity. Discovery of style as cultural and shared by community', 'voice really is an amazing instrument with never ending possibilities. Thank you.' This last

comment perhaps summing up part of the mission of our work: showing audiences the breadth and potential of the voice. Detractors were bemused: ‘on the hoof’ – why all the nonsense syllables?, ‘this is self-indulgent, and random sound with no meaning, at least to me.’. Despite the two bemused/bewildered comments I’m convinced this was the right thing to do at the end of the first half – and leaving the audience with a promise of more of that after the interval...

## INTERVAL

### B1 SEED

#### JR Commentary

This piece appears at the beginning of Volume 2 and was subtitled ‘prelude’. It was a moment from the recording where singer Ebe was warming up and it was picked up by Asier on the mic. We agreed it was rich and strong enough to be ‘a moment’ all on its own, and in fact does echo material Ebe went on the use in the piece SPROUT (which we didn’t perform) on Volume 2. It is also not unrelated to his material in STEM – his counter tenor line, a gentle and stable modal weave, responding to Rou’s main theme. It was evocative for listeners who commented ‘spirit calling’, beautiful timbral evolutions and control’, ‘fragility and strength’, ‘lovely tones announcing themselves’, ‘Nice haunting melody’.

I should have mentioned to the audience that it was a ‘moment-form prelude’, as it was indeed short, which confused one listener - ‘so short, was waiting for more’.

#### [Alistair Smith’s poetry on](#)

### SEED

*Born of silence  
a sustain  
becomes a tremble  
becomes a line  
A track to trace  
in the palm  
in the face*

*Its undulations  
meanderings  
its altitudes and attitudes  
elevations and contours*

*Waves of meaning perhaps  
sent on ripples from mouth  
to ear  
Orifices offering  
Chalices proffering*

### B2 ROOT

#### JR Commentary

This piece was a risk, given the singer on the recording Candida Valentino, who is a specialist in female vocal undertones and overtones, could not join us. I don’t know another female vocalist who can sing these tones as perfectly as she does, but we discovered Ebe, (male!) had this vocal facility. He was joined by Kate who wanted to explore working with these low tones as well. It was a dense texture with no forward momentum. It was a static-state piece with inner movement within the sphere of its central colours. Comments were attuned to the colours and mood of the piece: ‘primal, mysterious’, ‘reminds me of spinning lines, throat singing, trance’, ‘striving, darkness, effort, raw, granite, depth in earth needed for growth and power’, ‘very exciting and dynamic – very tight – amazingly atmospheric, simpler – one main texture’, ‘the spheres spin, chaos and order, harmony and discord, time stretches, what will be born?’, ‘roar (- or did they mean raw?)’, ‘deep dark beneath the earth’. One comment was not so sure about the female voice (Kate) on the low sound but liked the overall effect while wondering if it was

conjuring 'the outback' - 'wind, Tibetan drone good, but female vocal melody would have worked better than animal noises – or was that the outback?'.  
Alistair Smith's poetry on

Alistair Smith's poetry on

## ROOT

*Sweepings & brushwork  
Raspings & breath work*

*Granular oscillations  
of subsonics  
and infrasonic openings*

*Haunting humanity slides in  
Harmonics highlight  
add dimension and illuminate*

*Low frequencies return  
and submerge  
in additive synthesis  
of raw humanness*

## OPEN FORM 2

### JR Commentary

Interestingly, not so much data collected for this one from the audience. Possibly because they were too engaged to write and listen? Generally, it was well received with one particular word catching my attention: 'ceremonial'. This word, I would suggest mainly used when there is a sense that something transformative is occurring. More than just music, there is a 'ritual' of some sort occurring. Given the more animated quality of this Open Form approach, this is possible. Other comments - 'celebratory, expectations of what's coming', 'curiosity, excitement, freedom, exploring', 'loved it – solo tones amazing (tall girl)', 'powerful – rhythmic', 'alive' suggest this too. Two commentators listened from other perspectives – one from a musician, hearing a cultural reference and wondering about further orchestration potential - 'Mali or similar, recognisable, could even have stood a bit of beat box', and one noticing my response at the end of the piece: 'Jenni gave us all a look in the audience as if to say *'that just happened'* - it sure did!'. I'm sure I did give that look – wanting to make sure people knew this level of the work was the root of the choir's approach. I wanted to prove a point at this stage!

Alistair Smith poetry on

## OPEN FORM 2

*Song is embrace*

*A person speaks and personalities meet, allowing each other in welcome embrace.*

*And the embrace is "song"!*

*A success of sets, communing in diversity, join each other and try each other out; More than mere accommodation, they support and sustain in balanced differentiation of enhanced embrace.*

*Spurring and urging onwards, the whole emboldens' the one. Each filament is fortified by the collective and fostered to thrive in the communal mass of encouraged embrace.*

*And the embrace is "song"!*

## B4 REAP

### JR Commentary

Again, I'm pleased with the title of this (decided after the improvisation had been created for the recording) as it orientates the listener to an appropriate image which can be infused with the listening imagination. Comments spin out from this; 'community coming together for higher purpose', 'ensemble very impactful. different ethnicities performing the earliest sounds we made', 'beautiful blends', 'ritual, Arabic, African, masculine,' and the comment from the musician who likes to associate with references to known forms says: 'African again but with curious Gregorian overtones. Maybe even a bit of Bulgarian again?' The form and length of this piece was quite precisely followed from the recording and the length, which was not long. It was like a 'vocal fanfare' - to celebrate harvest, perhaps, - and the two male lead voices brought a wonderful positive 'masculine' energy. It's good to have some 'impactful' singing heard from men. and celebrated in an enriching, affirmative, non-threatening way. Let's celebrate the strong, positive masculine I say!

No comment from Alistair on this one (though he might have some content, which he cut. Need to check).

### OPEN FORM 3

#### JR Commentary

The final Open Form piece was again less audience data available than the rehearsed pieces. However, those comments that were offered were positive, apart from one. 'Going on a journey *'listen to your mind'* (this is a quote from a spontaneous spoken word poem from Dilara). WE'VE ARRIVED', 'so much fun to watch this unfold. I love how you/they come close to genre, but mix it up!', 'great connection and attention into the moment', 'more Toby? (she wondered if this was more text from the poet Toby Thompson, but it was Dilara's improvised words) more natural flow - a game of two halves', 'behind the curtain at an orchestral/operatic rehearsal' and 'Bjork variations. *Listen to you mind*. A bit like Revolution 9 at the end.'

The 'WE'VE ARRIVED' comment is rather interesting... perhaps she wrote that at the end of the piece - at which moment I turned to the audience and said; *'listen to you mind'*. - quoting Dilara. Maybe the 'WE'VE ARRIVED', was a moment of satisfaction and completion? Or a moment in which she felt the essence of the approach was being more truly delivered? If written during the music, it suggests she's almost 'at one' with it. One person commented 'disjointed' with no further explanation, suggesting the music had not engaged him, perhaps finding it frustrating in some way...maybe not holding together structurally, as he would have liked...

#### Alistair Smith poetry on

### OPEN FORM 3

#### *Vocal codes*

*Sensuality of an inflection  
a slight down turn  
tiny slides between*

*Click  
smack of the tongue  
The voice - a cavity  
beat the tattoo  
on taught skin  
Chamber muse*

*Roll off the tongue  
tremble off the lick  
stutter off its flick*

*Be ridiculous  
Be sublime*

*Release the wild - tame the mild*

### B6 Encore of STEM

## JR Commentary

There was an audience call for an encore, so the choir suggested we sing STEM again. I followed their lead on that. Only two comments, one read - 'thank you for performing it again. The first time (your opening) I was overcome with emotion. This time I was able to listen more. Still feel, but not in feeling,' – the other comment: 'Stem again. Try it with even more edge on the female vocals...'. I was pleased during this one that Dilara indicated to me that I could give Uran a solo, rather than wind the piece up, which I was about to do, having been through the main material. She was pointing at Uran and giving me the solos thumb sign. I trusted her instinct and gave Uran the signal. What a wonderful solo it was too... It was an interesting moment to take a hint from a member of the choir and go the way that was suggested... I have trust in the process.

No comment from Alistair on this one (though he might have some content, which he cut. Need to check).

## SECTION C [AFTER THE CONCERT]

C1 How are you feeling now in comparison to how you were feeling at the start of the concert?

### JR Commentary

Of the 13 people who chose to comment 10 were entirely positive. 1 was negative: 'Just as sceptical as I was at the beginning. I appreciate the novelty, but I don't know if you've made the world any better.' 1 was neutral/negative, 'no different', and one was a little unkind 'chilled into submission – don't take yourself so seriously!!'

Apart from that, the 10 positives were as follows: inspired', 'fantastic, more optimistic, touched', 'woken up', 'I was tired, now elated, excited, inspired and so happy I came – exceeded my hopes for the evening', 'excited, inspired as I expected. Stem even more involving the 2<sup>nd</sup> time. Wish I'd come to the venue earlier to hear the panel,' 'concert + 3 red wines. Relaxed and a little bit worked over by the music', 'intrigued, happy to have had the experience', 'relaxed', 'invigorated, impressed' and 'warm and uplifted'.

Without wanting to dwell on the negative 3 comments I'd like to say that it is interesting how resistant one person was to taking the concert on its own terms. It's as if she had her own terms and we were not adhering to them. Like she was listening through a very strong filter. I wonder how typical she is of a certain kind of person with her own, quite high musical standards (she was cross about the intonation in a couple of pieces) and at the same time lacking any sense of... shall we say... adventure? The 'no different' comment came from a 'researcher – education. Local authority project worker', age 24, female and a member of the conference. This suggests she has a strong sense of the musical/educational field and interest in women in leadership. Something we did didn't impress her. I guess it might have been a bit too free-wheeling for her. I think she might have been looking for more method and less madness? The final, slightly unkind comment was true to form with other comments from this member of the audience, for example, talking about objecting to the phrase 'blue-eyed' in Toby's poem. The fact is – Toby Thompson, who is a prize-winning young poet, has blue eyes and blonde hair.... Perhaps Dilara reading his words meant the image didn't relate to the reader – or the audience member, and so felt 'other' and thus offensive.

C2 What aspects of the concert are uppermost in your mind?

### JR Commentary

This question garnered nearly complete positivity. Only one negative comment 'I'm still unsure about the improv vs rehearsal aspect. Clearly, it's aleatoric, but is that the same thing? Now what? Where can you go from here?'. There's lots to be gleaned from this comment as the word *aleatoric* is an academic word from contemporary classical music and maybe not known by a general member of the public. So, she's giving her best, academic, reflective thought to this: I'm glad she could at least wonder about the 'the improv vs rehearsal aspect'. I presented the performance asking that very same question and having my own reservations about it. So, we could say she has picked up on my reservations and chosen to reflect that back to us. As for her thought – 'now what? where can you go from here?' – she's right again. I have no idea where next... but then again, who does know what the future holds? Positive comments ranged from excitement about the range and diversity of voices 'improvised sounds of human voice', 'diversity of voices, chemistry, spontaneity', 'the harmonies, the tension, the release', 'the stylistic diversity of the pieces, the flexibility of the voices, the colour and dynamic range', 'the incredible range and expressiveness of the voices', 'the harmonies in the pre-rehearsed pieces and the freedom of expression' - to an interest in the processes; 'the listening and sensitivity to each other and watching Jenni interacting, listening and leading,' 'the physicality of the performances', 'talent and trust' and to more genre observations about the music and its possible meaning; '*hocketing*, minimalism, opera! So many shifting

colours’, ‘the different textures; we’re in Europe and TIC is mixed ethnicity. Ancient sounds and traditions. How long will they last?’\* ‘Parallel process in terms of human and planet being/becoming. Communion’\*\*

\*additional comments by this person in email: ‘I was very struck by how much a lot of the sound felt very tribal/’World Music’ but was being sung by people from or living in the UK physically very remote from the places those sounds & rhythms would have originated from. A lot of the time these sounds die out in their nation of origin. I was in India quite a few years ago and someone was telling me about how when he was a child on the beaches of Goa, when the fisherman came back with a haul their wives and children would greet them on the beach with special songs written for that purpose. That doesn’t happen anymore and I have no idea if the songs are recorded or preserved in any way. The way those people earn their keep now is working in hotels or bars - and I don’t think there are special songs to celebrate their work! It’s very sad the extent to which music sung by everyone has been replaced by music performed by ‘singers’ who are now a separate category.’

AND –

‘Re: *Europeanised* comment. There is no intended appropriation criticism here at all. The event used a lot of World/tribal sounds and traditions and the context was very European given the setting and the singers. At times it felt very much in the European choral tradition. I didn’t feel they were appropriating anyone else’s sounds – I meant that they were *incorporating* them. Given how traditions disappear from their traditional setting around the world I wondered whether in the future the only people performing these sounds might be Europeans.’

\*\* additional comment from this person by email: ‘Overall I was completely swept up in the somatic, visual imagery and the immediate connection with soul, becoming etc.’

C3 What aspect(s) of the concert did you find most satisfying?

JR Commentary

This question was a bit too similar to the previous question... so will only mention additional insights, comments, not those that in essence, repeat answers from the previous question.

‘Their smiles. Feeling like I know TIC when I actually don’t!’. This comment I’m particularly delighted by, because I’ve seen it in feedback from previous concerts, so I’m glad it’s turned up here too – and it warms me to know that there is a real intimacy that is perhaps born of the collective creativity and the audience *being in the moment with the musicians*. Other comments - ‘the contrast among the pieces, they kept your attention alive at all times’. Mentioning the variety of music is good and was mentioned more than once and the comment that the attention was ‘alive at all times’ is reassuring to me, as I wonder if the music is sustaining interest across the whole concert. Also particularly pleased about the comments on ‘harmonic content’ being most satisfying; ‘some deeply enriching vocal pitch combinations’ is very pleasing to note. Also, that it was affecting on the emotional level for one person as she stated this was most satisfying thing for her. The one person who was most highly critical of the whole evening ends with a more generous comment; ‘I feel enriched as a person’, followed by a more astringent - ‘it’s like prune juice – good for you and somewhat refreshing, but not something you want all the time’.

C4 What aspects of the concert did you find least satisfying?

JR Commentary

I’ve decided not to comment on this section, just reproduce the comments as they are: ‘none’, ‘occasionally one voice stood out’, ‘if anything the film, only because there is already a lot to take in, of improv, humanity, all of it already’, ‘at some points felt forced/concert-esque/disrespectful to move or talk. Would have enjoyed it more if I could discuss and move’ – this is interesting – she wanted more of a jazz lounge vibe... which I’m not against... but it would be quite hard to perform if everyone was moving around and chatting. And from our outlier - ‘this may sound unkind, my apologies, there is a certain arrogantly serious aura to this performance. It’s like you’re intentionally trying to be incomprehensible so as to prevent us normal folk from understanding your point of view. Yes, it’s novel and different. It’s “Art”. I must comment on this observation; I’m pleased it’s “Art” – and I’m sorry she felt that ‘Art’ was somehow wrong and alienating. I want it to be art – definitely. I’m a composer and I’m looking for new models of working. I am interested in reaching new audiences, in new ways, using new techniques. I wonder what she would have likes, as a ‘normal folk’, that she would have found acceptable? Maybe the clue is in the word ‘folk’? Perhaps folk music? She mentions lack of narrative as being problematic for her and enjoying more a more abstract approach was too much of a leap for her. I take what she says on and will think about narrative... because I do want to be inclusive and perhaps, she is pointing us to a

way of being more accessible to a more conventional, quite timid audience. Final comment was - 'discord/sound FX/ spoken word'.

C5 "If you were to describe the Improvisers' Choir to a friend who didn't know them, what words, phrases, attributes, would you use to paint a picture of what they are like?"

#### **JR Commentary**

Again, this section speaks for itself, so I will collate the comments below in paragraph format: 'unpredictable, moving', 'an experience, inspiring', 'harmonious, colourful, varied', 'virtuoso from the soul, with collective and raw synergy,' 'very attentive to the moment, disciplined, creative, adventurous, brave', 'world music/tribal beatbox/jazz improvisation', 'vocal improvisation with great extended techniques. Atmospheric', 'intense, liberating, aesthetically valuable, intriguing, entertaining', 'an interesting perspective worth listening to once, inaccessible, incomprehensible', 'innovative', 'exciting, expert, compelling' and 'new and experimental and on the edge, different and surprising, takes you out of your box, could inspire you to let go of your own inhibitions.'

C6 "Some people might say that this kind of music is not for everyone. Would you agree? If so, how would you characterise the kind of person that would be most attracted to a concert like this?"

#### **JR Commentary**

Here are the verbatim comments: 'it's for someone open minded', 'open minded, soulful', 'yes but that goes for all music, open minded', 'not at all – shifting through so many influences and styles. I can't imagine who would not love this!', 'probably not for everyone – yet! People who seek freedom – 'now' creativity, seekers aware of the concrete and non-concrete world. People who seek now-ness and wildness/love diversity', 'I don't know if everyone would be open. I don't know if there's a TIC type', 'I agree. Someone who knows what talent/training and commitment and skill it takes to create such feel and different sounds with voice', 'I think it is *absolutely* for everyone, with or without musical knowledge. One must want to expose and play the game.' 'I 100% agree with that. You have very little narrative or anything that makes this accessible. What exactly is the point your trying to express? Someone attracted to this would be someone interested in novelty and someone who takes themselves and "Art" very seriously', 'yes, eclectic, possibly a muso', 'open eared, no prejudices', 'someone who appreciates free expression combined with listening and being responsive to others, not necessarily for conventional people'.

**Age range of people answering between 24 and 76**

**Only one male participated in the questionnaire.**

#### **Occupations:**

Musician  
Financial services marketing  
Lecturer  
Researcher, activist  
Voice movement therapist/ psychotherapist  
Bid Writer  
Researcher – education. Local authority project worker.  
Musician (classical) pianist, teacher, etc.  
PhD candidate singer  
Teacher  
Musician  
Retired

**Email from Veronica Chacon, one of the performers in the concert, on reading the questionnaire and responding, April 7<sup>th</sup> 2019.**

When finishing the concert, I was feeling so happy, nourished, proud!  
So I needed to let it cook a bit not just to let my ego being annoyed/angry/frustrated by the negative comments.

I decided to use those negative comments to learn about

- why we do what we do;

- what we do;
- how clear is all this for an audience (first-time listeners and others);
- what we are as a group.

(I have changed the order to match my paragraphs :) )

A clarity about everything came one night I was struggling to find sleep; to give a bone to my brain and let go on the mind after trying to meditate with little success, I decided to finish listening to a show given by [Oprah and Eckart Tolle](#) about his book, 'New Earth'. Listening to it, it came to me like something so obvious that I couldn't articulate with words until now:

**singing is the very thing that makes me totally 'present' and 'awaken';**

singing with TICs under your lead made me experience this phenomenon **in a group! Collective Enlightenment!**

The last thing I want this comment to sound like is that we got there a type of new religion-thing but beyond 'the music', **there is 'something good happening'** when we do what we do: it was always clear for me, but I am only starting to understand why.

One of the negative comments which touched me the most was that we gave that person the impression **we were taking ourselves so seriously...**

First, I was irritated because I had one dominant impression during our performance on that night: **we were playing!** you were playing us, we were playing with each other, the audience, the sounds, the texts, the texture, the structures and tools coming from the album.

So why and how someone could get exactly the opposite impression!!!

I realise now that this really comment is a really good example that in life but most of all in a creative job, we cannot please everybody; I have the feeling that this person had expectation she wanted for us to fulfil in her very own way. I am able to learn and let go on that comment now.

I strongly agree with you: we are not insisting enough on the fact that the recording of the album and our 'usual pieces' **are coming from the moment**, taking into account so many things; our own mood, the place, the audience, the type of evening, each singers individuality AND your composition through your signals!

- some good marketing punch line could be a big help there!

I also think that we are really embracing one of the most important aspects of improvisation (whatever genre !): **mistakes do not exist!**

As being totally in the moment, improvisation without safety net HAS to make sure that every material will be considered and give it a change.

'There is a crack in everything, that's where the light shines in' :)

In a business which can be so much about critics and judgements, I feel we are not playing a certain game... ;)

I would like to open a question about our relationship with the audience: for them to understand or get an even more clear sense of what we are doing, we could find a way to **include them** in our improv for at least one piece; it would allow us to share the joy of playing...

Who we are as a group has morphed quite a lot since the beginning of TIC's adventure:

- I still sense that our name should be something like (just the first idea that pops out of my mind) **'Jenni Roditi & TIC'** because the musicians you have been conducting and working with have changed a lot since we first rehearsed; YOU are the starting point of the whole concept; YOU are playing us and facilitating our ideas with your listening.

I would also insist on a fact I discussed with Alexander Ingram, which is that you are able to reunite a certain type of singers and musicians who not only have very **diverse musical backgrounds and strong personalities,**

but also **a will to approach the EGO (delicate) subject in a healthy way.**

- Alex even said it could give ideas to help society evolve in a more compassionate and respectful direction!

I must admit that the more time was given to each one of us to find our **human and musical space**, the easier and more natural was the experience (really first concerts); the latest rehearsals and concerts were not less interesting but I have found them more challenging humanly and musically, to allow "that healthy magic" to happen: meeting a colleague straight in the musical context of the improvisation, puts one in a really vulnerable situation; with more time 'to play' with each other and learn a bit more about each other makes the whole process even juicier, allowing us to **expand our comfort zone, not to step out of it!**

I don't know if those thoughts are expressed clearly enough to be of any help, but I want to thank you once more for having me as part of that beautiful and enriching project, for more than 3 years, now.

Thank you for sharing the audience's feedback and for encouraging us to reflect on it.