

## Reviews

***Uncharted: Creativity and the Expert Drummer.* By Bill Bruford. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-472-07378-8  
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When someone sits down to ‘make music’ with others – two sticks of wood in their hands and pedal contraptions at their feet, encircled by an array of stretched skins and metallic plates – what happens next? Certainly a ‘player’ is playing, but can what they do be called creative? Can the ensuing mediated experience of music between pitched and un-pitched instrumentalists be called creative from the perspective of the (un-pitched) drummer? In *Uncharted*, Bill Bruford – a virtuoso drummer associated in particular with the rock bands *Yes* and *King Crimson*, and more recently *Dr Bill Bruford* – sets out to answer this question, in this text. Crucially Bruford draws upon interviews he personally undertook with a set of ‘expert’ drummers as part of his doctoral research – using a series of questions designed to find out ‘obliquely, rather than directly’ (p. 182), whether what the expert drummers do is creative or not. Bruford takes the answers to such questions and dissects them in reference to key practitioners and thinkers in the field of creative studies: for example Negus and Pickering, Arieti and Sawyer. Bruford also draws from an established bed of cultural and social psychology, noting the work of Glăveanu, Csikszentmihalyi, Boesch, Cole and Eckensberger among others. The body of academic work is used to frame and contextualise responses from Bruford’s drummers and their insights into performance and recording.

For me the three things that propel us through *Uncharted* are: first, testimonies from drummers themselves (a list that includes drummers as diverse as Ralph Salmins, Thomas Strønen, Cindy Blackman and Asaf Sirkis); secondly, three visual ‘models’ proposed by Bruford himself; and thirdly the intelligent, intuitive and innovative reasoning he applies to both. After an opening barrage of dense academic thought and reference to set the tone and the intention, we soon move to some highly tangible ground with the introduction of some useful diagrams of theoretical models of creativity. The first of these is the SDCA framework, which acts as an emergent, arcing expression of proposed themes in creative action. This model serves as not only a means to conceptualise and break down the creative act, but also a major pathway of themes through the book itself. The four modes of the SDCA framework – Selection, Differentiation, Communication, Assessment – are developed as chapter titles assisting the narrative of the volume – and each term becomes a pillar of Bruford’s argument. The FCC model on the other hand (the Functional/Compositional Continuum) is a simple horizontal sliding scale, with limited functionality at one end and full-blown creativity at the other. The left-hand side of the FCC scale signals the functional, the amount of creative potential required for example for ‘putting down some drums’ on a 30-second advert in a busy and time-pressed situation, whereas, the right-hand side of the scale relates to the creative potential to improvise or compose, for example, a 50-minute drum solo, performed live to an audience of informed percussionists. It becomes obvious that in the

music industry as a whole there are many tasks or roles represented on this scale where creativity is not welcomed or expected of drummers – and of course others in which the task would be impossible without creativity. Yet the scale might be applied to almost any aspect of work in the creative industries. Using models and diagrams such as these, Bruford sets up the means which he will use to both measure and tease apart the role and the contribution of the drummer, as he applies them to the testimonies of his expert cohort. (*Expert* is used by Bruford to describe drummers that have undergone at least the 10 year or 10,000 hour rule of skill acquisition and knowledge development in the field, but it also takes in aspects such as having experience in both leading and performing in ensembles, taking part in commercially available recordings which may be session work and also ‘solo’ projects by the drummers themselves.)

Early on, Bruford deals with how drummers attach meaning to their performances, and how that meaning can inform practice. Part of the drummer’s role is to ‘make music work and make it matter’ (p. 17), on which a whole lifetime of experience in both music and life may come to bear. To fulfil this role, something beyond the provision of a mere mechanical register of time must come into play, and naturally this is where the concept of creativity begins to emerge. Bruford makes the point that, in performance, expert drummers have literally thousands of options at their disposal: from potential styles and ways of playing to the velocity of touch or the part of the stick used, or even choice of drum. As explained in the SDCA model, selection is only the first part. It is how an expert applies those skills and whether the outcome of that application is musical or relevant, or whether it ‘adds value’ to the music. Given that in terms of modern popular music drums and drumming are central to the role of the song or musical piece as much as the key or register, a drum track might often be the first thing to go down in a recording session. Therefore the drummer can often be related to the music as being, as Max Roach puts it, an architect. As Roach explains: ‘It’s about design, It isn’t about melody and harmony ... Think of it as constructing a building with sound. It’s architecture’ (p. 49).

Often by design, the drummer has to go first, and has to ‘make it work and make it matter’ (p. 17) – sometimes before anything else is added; sometimes performing last and having to make sense of what is already there. Drummers can therefore be the ‘invisible composer’ in performance and live work, operating far beyond the wielding of a basic temporal authority. Drummers are making hundreds of choices every moment as they play (as in Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘flow’), and they can be consciously and subconsciously steering the narrative of the music by their choice of tempo (ahead, on or behind the beat?), changes in timbre (full, medium, soft?), rhythmical complexity (complex, understated or simple?); also where they place fills, based on the structure of the song or musical piece *as they see it*, and where they might choose to add or build dynamics – again based on their musical or musically intuitive map of the piece. Again, these are just a few examples based on the aspect of ‘selection’ noted by Bruford, but all can be considered by the listener as adding value to the music.

But what is that value? And what is the music? These are, not surprisingly, harder to define in the scope of this book, and therefore not always immediately clear. Yet situating himself as a self-confessed ‘insider–outsider’ (p. 7), Bruford is well-placed to refer to the touchstones of jazz and pop, for example. I found many of his insights (and the less guarded insights of the drummers themselves) to ring

true in this area, certainly putting into context many experiences of my own. Noting in terms of creativity that in pop the origin of an idea is less important than its transformation, Bruford paints a picture I instantly recognise when he explains that 'much invention in popular music is devoted to reaffirmation: the production of what listeners (and producers) already have, expect, or know. Rather less effort is devoted to the production of what people do not have, do not expect, or do not know, an activity that generally welcomes, and may require creativity' (p. 2). It is that sliding scale again, the FCC, of what is needed based on the situation, and how that might be delivered. It may not be a fully creative mindset that is being asked for in many studio and live situations. Yet drummers have to be constantly on their toes, and adapting not just to new situations, but to new directions and approaches in music. As Bruford puts it: 'The drummers here understand their practice to take place in the context of perpetual change in the ecological, technological, sociological, and psychological dimensions of drum performance within the greater domain of music invention' (p. 121). You have to be aware of what is going on to be able to contribute, and contributing judiciously and sensitively to the piece could be seen as part of acting creatively.

Satisfyingly non-linear in its approach, *Uncharted* leans towards the inter-relatedness of themes, from meaning in performance (p. 31), to audience and reception (p. 129). Transformational modes feature frequently, and there are often references to the cyclical nature of creativity, experience and meaning, underpinning as they do Bruford's argument throughout the book. Music is also seen as a path to change (p. 130), and this can relate to the meaning drummers attach to their performances. Fundamentally, I particularly like the powerful existential questioning that kicks off Bruford's research, the energy of which drives us all the way through *Uncharted*, for example asking of drummers 'What do we do and why do we do it? Is there anything creative about it? If so, how do we achieve and experience that creativity and how might it inform our practice? Who attributes creativity?' (p. 3). Later, having peered through the action-theoretical lens and bounced around the company of the aforementioned writers, we ponder now with some insight an initial question 'What are drummers for, if not to be creative?' (p. 3). Occasionally, the bones of a PhD are felt in some self-justifying passages, but overall the transformational, cyclical and relational themes are appealing, and the title works well as a book. One change that is tangible, however, is Bruford's transformation from drummer to Doctor of Philosophy, or 'from poacher to gamekeeper' as he puts it (p. xiii). I welcome this transformation, giving us as it does an early start to the under-researched world of the creativity and the actions of drummers. It is overdue and much needed, and those initial existential questions lead to some very tangible and brilliant potential answers later on, most notably in the context of creativity studies.

It is worth noting that the book includes a contribution by another expert drummer and academic, Mark Doffman, whose forward sets the tone very carefully and with a balance befitting a step into such uncharted territory. Doffman weighs up the themes in the book, but also characterises the author very well; his conceptual device of equalling Bruford's ability to effortlessly juggle polyrhythms as a drummer with his ability to now effortlessly juggle philosophies and ideas is attractive. Doffman notes that this is a masterful contribution to our understanding of creativity, but also a compelling account of what it takes and means to be a drummer. Indeed, Bruford's book opens up a great debate on both.

*Uncharted* is more about creativity than it is about drummers; and it is more about the group of expert drummers than it is about Bill Bruford. However, any drummers keen on reading it will enjoy a rare opportunity to have a practitioner in the field such as Bruford being able to share not only some of his insights from a lifetime's worth of experience, but also many insights from that selection of expert drummers in such a candid fashion. Those involved or interested in the field of creativity studies will find rare and crucial insights into the nature creativity at a fundamental and essential level – an uncharted one, until now.

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***Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism.* By Raymond Knapp. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. 380 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6950-9  
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Raymond Knapp informs the reader that he began his book following an intuition that his pleasure in Haydn was related in a basic way to his pleasure in musicals. Haydn's compositions, like many musicals, offer examples of coexisting fun and seriousness. Knapp's contention is that German Idealism, with its emphasis on inwardness and contemplation, created problems for this composer's later critical reception. Haydn creates 'sites of joyous interaction' that create awkwardness for some Haydn scholars (unnamed) because of a friction with German Idealism, which demands that music must strive to be the highest and purest of the arts (a key text being Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 1854).

In the first chapter, Knapp offers a brief account of such idealistic thought, tracing it back to the exploration of inner life in Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), and the interest in subjectivity initiated by Kant and developed by Fichte. Musical idealism grew in the 19th century, and it is no coincidence that this occurred when *Unterhaltungsmusik* was proliferating. Knapp suggests that a crucial moment arrived when Schopenhauer, in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819, revised 1844) interpreted music as an expression of the Will. By connecting music to the Will, Schopenhauer gave music a kind of content – albeit metaphysical and beyond consciousness. Music was now to be listened to as an object of contemplation, although active engagement was required rather than passive immersion. Schopenhauer declared music a great and magnificent art that powerfully affected the inner being (*Die Welt*, vol. 1, book 3, §52), and music was soon hailed as the most elevated of the arts, a remarkable change from the low position it held in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, on account of its inability to expand cognition. German Idealism was soon having to come to terms with German nationalism, but Knapp argues that it successfully accomplished this by idealising the past and by equating *ernste Musik* with German music.

Knapp explains how idealism affected the 19th-century reception of Bach and Mozart, and the strategies that were adopted to ensure both composers fitted into the idealist framework. Haydn proved more of a challenge, because he appeared to be often, and transparently, an entertaining composer. Knapp describes the idealist