Preface

This book is the culmination of many years performing, and thinking about, intercultural improvisatory music made possible by the Internet. As a classically trained trumpeter and self-taught improviser, the ability to improvise with cross-cultural musicians online gained a conceptual hold in the late 1990s. As will be discussed shortly, networked music making has a much longer history of technologists, musicians and sound artists hacking programming languages and developing software to link machines and dispersed performers together. However, it was through my participation in the beta-testing stages of various telematic audio systems that questions about the interaction between displaced performers became more important than those between performer and interface. It also became clear that despite the Internet connecting many world cultures, the majority of online collaborations were taking place between performers in North American and Europe. Western styles of blues, jazz, rock, electronic, and electro-acoustic music dominated the networked music landscape.

Against this backdrop, the impetus to collaborate with musicians of different cultures led to the foundation of the network music ensemble, Ethernet Orchestra. The group emerged in 2007 as a result of a call for improvisers on media lists, and via word of mouth. It has subsequently developed into a circle of expert musicians from Australia, Malaysia, China, Mongolia, Iran, the UK, France, Germany and the USA. Ethernet Orchestra performs to audiences online and in physical spaces, radio broadcasts, as well as in educational contexts. These performances have led to many hours of informal discussions with fellow collaborators about the complexities of tele-improvisatory experience from different cultural perspectives. Topics have centred around perception, agency and presence in displaced musical interaction, as well as negotiation of unfamiliar tuning systems, modes and rhythm cycles, and the effects of climate and circadian rhythms on players' creativity. These conversations have been formative in the development of this research and the lines of enquiry it has taken. They have also allowed me to talk with fellow performers in the immediate context of online performances, and in the language of performance practices, rather than in

theoretical or technical terms. It should be noted that while the case study performancs described in this book include members of Ethernet Orchestra, they also feature a range of other players, and were not performed under the guise of the Ethernet Orchestra. To maintain a distance from the performance analysis, I did not contribute as a performer in any way. While there are many good examples of auto-ethnographic studies, I felt it necessary to assume the role of disinterested researcher while still having an intimate knowledge of, and expertise within, the field of study.

Ethernet Orchestra has also provided me with opportunities to integrate our work into my university teaching of music and sound courses. Audio-visual recordings of our performances have made engaging material for the analysis of intercultural improvisation as well as discussions about culture and agency, and authorship in tele-collaborative performance contexts. The ensemble has also participated in networked performance projects with students from UNNC Orchestra (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, Campus, in China); the Bachelor of Sound and Music Design, UTS (University of Technology Sydney, Australia); and the Bachelor of Music program at ECU (Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia). Each of these collaborations has enabled students to learn specific technical, creative and tele-collaborative skills with students they would not likely have otherwise met.

The experiences I have gained from these collaborations have not only shaped the approaches I take in this book but have also informed my conviction that future creative and collaborative music and sound practices will be networked and distributed across global distances and cultures. While this already occurs in business, creative media industries, and, to some extent, education, it is yet to be fully explored in mainstream tertiary music education. International composers, sound designers and musicians are increasingly working with geographically dispersed professionals in the production of high-end film music and sound for games. This point is echoed by a friend, the acclaimed British film music composer, Jon Wygens, who says he would not be able to do the work he does without conducting most of his creative work over the Internet. Notwithstanding this reality, there is a dearth of university music and sound courses that provide students with the necessary literacies to work professionally in tele-collaborative contexts. Such knowledge should include a

technical understanding of network architectures, practice-based experience of telematic musical interaction, cultural competencies, and intercultural communication skills. I am a strong advocate for the need to develop these skills in an educational model that will equip students for future work in the areas of collaborative music and sound design.

It is from these perspectives that this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how cross-cultural musicians collaborate and experience tele-musical performance. It presents new practitioner knowledge about how performers of different cultures collaborate in the co-creation of tele-improvisatory musical sound. Each chapter provides musicians, researchers and students with a resource that can be used to understand tele-collaborative music making and enable them to develop it further in their practices.

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Sydney, Australia, 2018.