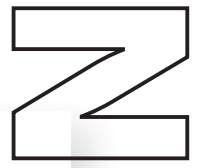


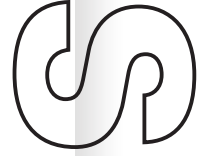
Native Strategies

issue 5

summer 2016



(enter)



MUSIC
ISSUES
MUSIC
ISSUES
MUSIC

CHIARA GIOVANDO
CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE

LUKE FISCHBECK
ANNA LUISA PETRISKO

ERIK AVERY
JULES GIMBRONE

DAVID JAMES PAHA
MICHAEL ANTHONY IBARRA

ARCHIE CAREY
MOLLY ALLIS & JENICA ANDERSON

OSCAR MIGUEL SANTOS
ODEYA NINI

CLAIRE CRONIN
DORIAN WOOD

KEVIN ROBINSON
TODD LEREW

MORGAN LEE GERSTMAR
XINA XURNER

INGRID LEE
WEBB GARRETSON

The
Privileging
and Negation
of Bodies
of Sound



(enter)



performers:

stage1

chiara giovando **p12**
christopher rountree

luke fischbeck
p16 anna luisa petrisko

erik avery
jules gimbrone **p20**

david james paha
p26 michael anthony ibarra

archie carey **p30**
molly allis & jenica anderson

oscar miguel santos
p34 odeya nini

claire cronin
dorian wood **p40**

kevin robinson
p44 todd lerew

morgan lee gerstmar
xina xurner **p52**

ingrid lee
p54 weba garretson



music issues

Curated by Brian Getnick, Tanya Rubbak, and Jules Gimbrone

Issue #5: Music Issues – The Privileging and Negation of Bodies of Sound, *Native Strategies* utilized LACE to host performances and to stimulate collaboration between the often disparate artistic worlds of music and sound production in Los Angeles.

N (enter) S installation was a *Native Strategies* issue come to life in a three-dimensional space at LACE, from July 9 to July 31, 2014 where over 30 artists to performed and enacted the process of producing a journal.

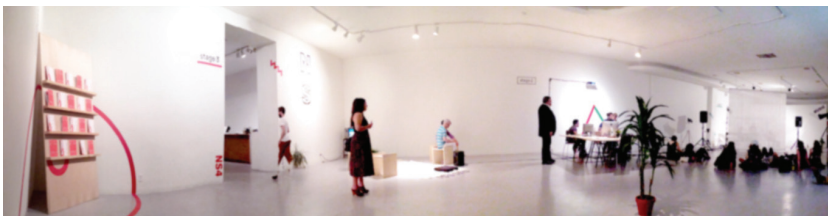
The installation consisted of 3 stages designed to symbolize phases of our production cycle. *Stage 1* was a mock television studio in which artists engaged in dialogues and performed with and for each other, thus generating material for the journal. *Stage 2* was the production desk where content was processed, edited, and archived. *Stage 3*, a reading room, where the printed journal was available to the public.

N (enter) S enacted the experience of reading a *Native Strategies* issue by positioning people and their practices directly into each other's orbits. As a whole, our model of research is to pay close attention to what is happening on the ground in Los Angeles and to represent the divergent ideologies, methods and wisdom of contemporary practitioners and investigating critics. The aim is to create encounters between artists from different regions, classes, and degrees of formal education, ethnicity and sexuality.

Brian Getnick, Jules Gimbrone & Tanya Rubbak in conversation.
A Disembodied Impostor: A Conversation between Rossen Ventzislavov & Dorian Wood
Weba Garretson & Mark Wheaton in conversation with Brian Getnick

p6

60



stage2

BRIAN GETNICK, JULES GIMBRONE
& TANYA RUBBAK IN CONVERSATION



The
Privileging
and Negation
of Bodies
of Sound

music issues

KIAN GETNICK One of the questions we had was about the way that performers and composers differently used their bodies in making their work. Do you feel like we got some surprising research or feedback from that?

JULES GIMBRONE I think that we got some interesting beginnings to conversations. It was exciting for people to be actually talking to each other about these things. This really resonates with me because I've been involved in dance communities as well. In dance communities, people are talking about performance all the time. They sit in circles before they perform. They sit in circles after they perform. They talk to each other. In music, we just don't have that culturally. We don't talk to each other.

B I was thinking about Pauline



Oliveros' Deep Listening concept and about how in this issue we applied deep listening as a structure.

J Within the work, we invited the artists into that kind of listening by making it private, but also public. It was very intimate in ways, but also did not allow a space for people to escape. The stage also ended up in a

semi-private, but also in a public and highly documented space.

B All in all, the performers seem to really like that structure. I have to say one thing I'm surprised about and one thing that you've really taught me as a curator is the amount of structure you can impose upon performers and how willing they are to rise to the occasion. It really yielded something great. The structure still allowed for a lot of openness and indeterminacy to happen, it became, in itself, a sort of indeterminate sound score.

TANYA RUBBAK Do you think that it's something specific to music, that these were musicians and not visual artists or strictly performance artists? Because there's that idea of the open, indeterminate score?

J I think that artists do that all the time when they're doing a show in a gallery that has a certain space to consider but I do think musicians are generally more easy going and willing to adapt because musical practice takes its form from adaptation and experimentation.

B I think that's true but there's also a real toughness about asserting that the sound is going to be their sound, it's going to be enveloping, it's going to be projected beyond the scrim and beyond their bodies. I'm wondering if this is also a part of the reason it was easy to work with them in this confinement.

"I think that's why sound is such a radical and queer medium. It's like water: it's uncontainable." Jules

J Because they aren't really confined. I think that's why sound is such a radical and queer medium. It's like water: it's uncontainable. You can build walls that contain, but it's very hard to fully contain it. I think that it's not easily flattened, or discernible, or interpreted. It allows for a lot as a basic raw energy. That's why I was so interested about this idea of bodies. Because the body is both slippery and somewhat contained.

The body is this reality that we grab onto as human beings, but it's simultaneously always dying, or changing, or evolving. There's something in that duality that makes music and sound practice questioning of the body as a vessel or container.

B But I think no one would mistake that the body isn't important to your practice. In the performances I've seen your body is highly involved as an activator of various objects and other humans who you play as instruments and collaborate with in installation. The work becomes highly sculptural, and exists between heaviness and lightness, it has sculptural vocabulary.



On the other hand, I think of someone like David James Paha, who sits at a small computer screen and presses buttons, but the sound com-

ing out of the speakers feels massive. I have to admit, sometimes when I go to experimental music shows and I see people crouched in front of laptops, I think to myself, "Why are we watching this person here? Where is the person's body in this performance?"

J Honestly I'm actually not so interested in the body. I'm interested in the body as a not-body. I'm interested in the transformative power of the body. For David*, it becomes more about him and his practice and how the piece that he presented was all about an immersive sound environment that people can walk and engage in, but depending on where they are in the room, and how they hear things, will have a vastly different experience from each other.

I would say he's creating almost like a ghost body in the room for us to walk in. He's engaging in something that's potentially more intimate and maybe more close to what it means to have a body than someone who's naked on the floor and writhing around or something like that. I feel like it allows other people to experience their own bodies in a way that isn't so solid or fixed.

T To add onto that, I think his performance was one of the most visceral ones for me. I had to close my eyes and really experience the sound, it was very powerful.

B I'm wondering if David's minimalism re-exposes us to ourselves as listening bodies while your piece

Jules, brought me into other narrative places because you are moving, you are activating the space. You're a character in your work, a kind of conductor.

J There have been pieces in my past that I've been very conscious about playing with power and the relationship that has with the audience and performers. But it's also just the necessity of moving things around and putting chords and doing a huge amount of work. The technical realities of working with a bunch of electronics and things that are constantly breaking is simultaneously exciting and really frustrating.

B I guess the question to me is still about the concept of the non-body. I'm trying to understand it. I accept that music has a bodily presence. That it's a physical force that you can measure with machines, and you can feel the vibrations. Your work seems in a way to make this very literal.

J Yeah, and that's paramount.

B I see through your practice the physicality of composition and its embodiment. However, I do not yet see the non-body of what you're saying except that maybe within notions of representation.

J It's just like the metaphor and symbolic content is the non-body I think. I'm using my body to make all these, but I'm not ... There's no defined place that my body or anyone else who's performing with me resides in.

B Because your body is in flux?

J I think it's because all bodies are in flux and while some activity within my practice has to do with being queer and whatever, there's no clarity to identity that I'm really interested in. I'm interested in talking about difference and talking about experience and talking about how things changed, and how things are moving and how being human ends up in a weird, subjective place.

But at the same time I'm visibly queer, or trans, or whatever you want to call me. My subjectivity is in flux, yes. Also, very contested. This space that I take up in the world is being read as male in certain spaces. How do we take up space and how do we command and take power in our world? Gender is a huge part of that and it's also deeply strange to me that it can just change from one moment to the next. I'm in this really strange place where I get to experience gender specificity and potential identities in different ways from very different vantages.

My practice actually has a lot to do with this, but it's very subtle and it's not because I'm explicitly talking about these things in our practice. That takes all the nuance and the life potentially out of it.

T When you were talking to Erik, you mentioned that you sort of transitioned from being a maximalist to more of a minimalist. I want to hear about that transition and what that was like?

J Honestly, I wouldn't call myself a minimalist either. Even in my own practice, it's more like a stripping away all these superfluous things. What's interesting to me is the process of stripping away and then putting the stripped down things together. Putting these things on top of each other or next to each other and then stripping away again. It's about trying to find clarity in the action.

T It's interesting that you're still putting things together. It's as if the maximal tendency is still there, but it's stripped down. I find it really hard. Especially if you have that tendency to put things together, to include, to be expansive.

B I think it's like what we were observing about these pairs that were put together is that ... We brought them together because we thought about the contrast. If we talk about our framework for this series as a composition. There were ten performances and in each performance there were two musicians who were often contrasting in terms of their practices. Yet there was a surprising amount of overlap and collaboration.

J Similarity.

B I'm thinking it's not about numbers when we say minimalism or maximalism. It's about clarity of a structure that allows things to be or not be as they want to be or not be. We ended up with these very solid forms in the form of the pair, but the contrast between each pair was successful and they became almost like minimal structures even though they could do

anything they wanted here in that crazy setup. They were like very distinct links in a chain. When you setup a score, it's a way of seeing as much as hearing.

T Yeah, that clarity seems like a good way to think about.

B We could look at this, your diagram* as a sound score.

J Totally.

B It's notation. These are notations on the wall.

J Yeah, you could play this whole room.

B You could play this as a score.

T I think of it in terms of publications because they're structures for looking at things, like this space is as a three dimensional publication. All the little markers function like captions. In a publication, you have a caption next to an image which tells you what it is. Here they are captions that activate the space.

B Interestingly, we couldn't point to how anyone of these captions was specifically activated, but it's a retro-active score. Looking back on it, it's clear. It would be easy for you to say to somebody: all of these glyphs in this room are instructions on how to perform the room and I would believe it because of what happened in this space.





T I think some of it was in the design from the beginning. But it's also interesting to see it as a music venue that calls attention to itself, as a very self reflexive stage.

J Anything else that you guys noticed from this experience? [laughing] Angel is like, get off the stage!

ANGEL ALVARADO: [yelling from across the room] I'm letting you guys experience what you made all the performers experience on that stage!

B I'm amazed at how implementing a structure concretely in the space really works.

T Me too.

B I feel like out of this ... all three of us were forced to speak about the exhibit multiple times during the residency and the first time was very difficult, and then it became much easier. Out of all of those conversations one thing I realized was that we're interested in generating encounters, by physically getting people together. What had been happening before was that they were put next to each other in the journal and they were performing in shows, but we weren't forcing them to face each other. This is the

first time we've asked the artists to orient to each other, and that yielded something incredible.

J That's the most difficult and interesting thing about being an artist. Those real conversations that you have with those artists from past journals and both of you guys, like you have those encounters, but it's really interesting to allow musicians and other artists to talk to ... Just give them a stage to talk to each other. Because why else are we doing this if it's not to talk to each other? It's for us ultimately, right? The audience is great, but the audience comes and goes.

That community, those conversations, that's what is really interesting I think. We're not isolated at all. Some artists think of themselves in that way, isolated from the world and from each other. I think it actually goes back to our theme and talking about the body and talking about the potential for musicians to isolate themselves. It is real, they don't talk to each other as much. They do kind of sometimes hide behind a computer or they do hide from the world under a mask, under a torrent of sound. That's real.

T I don't know where I came across it, but I always thought of sound as being the most immediate of all art forms. You close your eyes and it enters your body. With visual art there's a little bit more distance, it's a little more abstracted. Then writing, the written word being the most cerebral. I think that's the reason why I like

meditation and sound. The ear is older. I feel like it's William Blake who actually said that. It always stuck with me.

J What can we know for sure with just listening?

T You can't really trust your perception which depends on what state you're in, what you ate that day, your brain chemistry. It's so fluid which goes back to what you were talking about earlier about the fluidity of identity, but also the basic fluidity of our perception. You'll never hear anything the same way, so we can't really know anything for sure.

J You know when things are ... you know different things than you do visually, that's what I think it is. It's like the sense of smell. Or like you want to kiss someone or not. You don't know why, but it's this visceral kind of primordial experience. I think the same is with sound.

You know something is safe, you know something is not safe. You know something is like the tone of someone's voice. You can tell by the tone of someone's voice rather than what exactly they're saying even. I don't know, there is a different level of knowing. Visually....this is the thing. As much as I love the visual world, it's almost like a prison.

B It's draped upon us. If we're thinking about outside and inside, like the way we are clothed, we are skinned, we are colored, we have height, and a choreography of movement. All of these qualities are explicitly conditioned upon us. What you're saying, you can close your

eyes and you can identify somebody by the sound that they're making, you can locate where they are and you can detect all sorts of levels of truth or false by just listening to the tone. It's a broader, more maybe vulnerable phenomenon.

Therefore, maybe queerer, maybe there is another argument for its queerness. It's very difficult to get out of a binary visually. It's very difficult to get out of a binary physically, but to listen to a voice, that's a trickier thing. We might know that's male or female, but there's many cases where we don't. I wonder if that's a way in also to thinking about sound as being a disruptor again to a perception of physicality through sight.

J Yes, exactly. For example maybe visually I know there's a wall here, but listening I can tell what kind of wall it is. If my ears were tuned to it, I could tell what makes that wall.

B Sound is penetrating, and sound is receiving all the time, and there's no choice actually, there's no choice about that. With the visual world, it's constant mediation, and the mediation is something that we're not aware of, and that mediation is something that is highly controlled. There's an inter-penetrative quality, a democracy to the act of sounding and listening. It's very hard to say if it's a male or female act, because we're talking about penetration ultimately when we're talking about certain qualities of gender which are oppressive or considered powerful.



J Yeah, then we'll go into conversation like who is heard, who is allowed to have a voice, who is listened to? The guy that we saw on the street today had the most crazy, amazing voice and he just wanted to be listened to and no one was listening to him.

B Everybody was listening to him and nobody was approaching him.

J Everyone was listening to him, but ignoring him simultaneously. There's something about calling out to stake your claim in the world and having no one listen to you. That's like a really sad experience I would think.

B I think that in this installation the things we were really honoring and focusing on were accepting and listening and then talking. Maybe we did execute a queer paradigm of a score in that way.

J I think we should probably wrap up. Thanks guys.

B Thank Jules. Thanks Tanya.

T Thanks Brian. Thanks Jules.

B Thanks Angel.



music issues

Chiara Giovando
(MANKIND) &
Christopher Rountree
July 17, 2014



chiara giovando
christopher rountree

CHIARA GIOVANDO One of the things that interests me about the idea of conducting is this idea about control and whether we believe in control anymore because I think there's a lot of ways that control has failed us. I think there's a lot of exploration now happening in sound, but in all sorts of different art practices surrounding collapse.

CHRISTOPHER ROUNDTREE What do you mean?

CG Well, especially when I play music, but also I think when I curate, I'm really interested in moments of failure. So constructing a situation in which failure could be celebrated.

CR Right.

CG Maybe I'm making too hard of a tie here, but this idea of control, or trying to control a situation, or re-create it, has a lot to do with our investment in fidelity. And I don't know if fidelity is that interesting.

CR I think it was for a hundred years but not anymore. It's a weird thing to be a conductor right now because the goal is to make yourself obsolete.

CG Oh really?

CR I mean, I think any great conductor's goal is to give an impulse that's just like, *You can do it and then sit back.*

CG But is that for traditional orchestras, too?

CR Yeah. The thing about conducting is that it's more of a activity of the last century. It stems from the Ford Car Factories, where people have four hours to do a thing that should take 60 hours. If they didn't have a conductor they would all stand in a straight line and not listen to each other in a closed way.

CG I mean there's also the issue of how in a large orchestra, you don't want soloists. All the great players are playing in quartets, they're not orchestra players.

CR I don't know if that's true. I get why you're saying that, though.

CG My point is that there's something about an orchestra where you're meant to disappear. Your voice is meant ...

CR ...to assimilate. There's no question, yeah.

CG The whole violin section is supposed to sound like one violin, so how do you make those kinds of connections that you're describing in a situation where people are disappearing?

CR Right, that's a really good question. I think actually that might be the big question of the 21st century, for orchestras: how do we make this thing relevant? By relevant, I mean, everybody has a voice and contributing, but you can see people in the back are wanting to contribute less than the people in the front.

CG Really?

CR Absolutely. Maybe I'm trained, and I know what it looks like when 100 percent of the people are invested. So to see only half of the orchestra really invested, it's because they think their jobs are less important because somebody has told them that. It's an incredible thing in an orchestra when everybody's engaged. The group I run is 15 people, because when it's 15 of us, we all have an autonomous voice, and I hone those. There's no violin section, there's just violin 1 and violin 2 and they're both soloists. There's one flute, it's just her.

CG What I want to ask again is what does it mean to conduct people, and what does it mean to try and direct or control a large group of people through musical expression?

CR I think my goal is to understand how I can influence these people by making them closer together and feel empowered by the energy of one another. If I do that the right way, it rarely has to do with movement. What I wanted to ask you was about your thought process. When I watched you start your performance you went into this zone. It was fascinating to watch your face, and to watch you go into that place.

CG I'm really emotional when I play music. It's only emotional, and it's totally different than when I curate, which is completely cerebral. It's just like exploring those two different parts of myself, but it's always improvised. I've been studying since I was four years old, but I never wanted to practice, and my first concert was a Suzuki concert on violin and I was supposed to play *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, and instead I threw my violin into the audience because I was so pissed. Yeah, I just never was interested at all in studying and practicing. I just wanted to feel it, and I think it's a lot about the relationship between the violin and voice for me. The violin is very similar in terms of its frequency range to the human voice, and so when I play, often I feel I'm hearing so many things that the audience doesn't hear, because I'm hearing the violin resonate in my body, and I'm hearing my voice resonate the violin. That really leads me.

“The violin is very similar in terms of its frequency range to the human voice, and so when I play, often I feel I’m hearing so many things that the audience doesn’t hear, because I’m hearing the violin resonate in my body, and I’m hearing my voice resonate the violin.” chiara

CR Incredible, because it's touching your bones.

CG Yeah. Your whole neck and your vocal chords are vibrating the body of the instrument. That's what I really like exploring and, I didn't do it so much today, but I also really like exploring frequencies coming out of speakers, because they vibrate both the body and the violin.

CR Right, and how about the text you were singing?

CG Word shapes. Sometimes there are words, sometimes there are not [laughs].

CR Is that totally intuitive or emotional?

CG Yeah. I think today, I started singing a song that I used to sing with someone I was in duo with, but just a little part of it, so that was like some words I remembered.

CR What were those?

CG *Living in the kingdom of death, dead in the kingdom of life.*



“I think my goal is to understand how I can influence these people by making them closer together and feel empowered by the energy of one another.” chris

anna louisa petrisko
luke fischbeck

“I can’t attach meaning to music. It resonates on cultural, emotional, and physical planes, and allows for a multidimensional experience, but I can’t ever permanently or solidly attach these meanings to the music. I have to always leave it open to be completely free.” Luke

Anna Luisa Petrisko (JEEPNEYS) Fischbeck 2014



music issues



ANNA LUISA PETRISKO Hi Luke.

LUKE FISCHBECK Hi Anna.

L I have to say I felt very honored by the performance. Thank you.

A You're welcome. I was really happy to share it with you.

L So, I'd like to start by talking about technology because music is a technological thing I think. Specifically, I was curious to talk a little bit about Skype as a way of relating to loved ones, a way of connecting across time and distance...or just distance. I'm curious about your thoughts as a musician, a listener, and as a user of these technologies, if you have strategies for better using these kinds of devices to relate.

A Well, I've been in a Skype relationship for the last 4 months, and I've realized I've become conditioned to the calling and messaging alerts. When I hear it, I act like a little puppy; I get really excited and start scratching at things. That kind of makes me sad. That sound is not my favorite but I rely so much on technology to the point where I start to feel like it's part of my body. Like I've literally made out with a computer screen, in fervor. Just the feeling of wanting to dive into the screen.

It makes me feel a little bit insane, and it makes me just need to really be in my body and deal with it. So if I feel like I am here, and I'm using my body in my space, and then there's a screen, and then there's somebody else using their body in their space and somehow we can make the screen into a portal. If we put our energies into it properly, we can somehow be touching each other. I don't know, it kind of reminds me of the Octavia Butler book, you know the one where... where humans are captive of the...I can't remember the names of the individuals. It's a trilogy, it's the Xenogenesis trilogy.

L *Mind Of My Mind*, that one?

A No, but that's a good one. Anyway, it turns out that humans can no longer mate with each other unless they have a third party alien. In a way, technology reflects this because it's this body that has way more advanced abilities than humans do. I wish Skype was more alien. Maybe in the future it will be. I've heard about certain apparatuses that you can plug in via USB and be able to communicate through sensation over Skype, but I haven't tried it yet.

L I guess the idea of apparatus in the larger sense seems to be really appropriate to discussions about music and performance

and audience. We were inclined to think of this performance as for an audience of one, performing for the other. As we are performing, we are also shielded with the scrim as a barrier. The crowd can hear us but not really see us. So there's this very special apparatus that's been created here, and it helps us to understand some of the specific exchanges that we have going on. I was very aware during your performance, of music as a place or a way of creating a place.

A I feel like whenever we perform, it's a ritual. I chose to hone in on that aspect of performing, and just make it really direct on one person. When you were performing, I felt like I was the only person in the room. It was really special.

L I'm curious what you think about what music means, or whether music has the potential to carry meaning.

A Yeah, music to me is a spiritual practice, and it means everything and nothing at the same time. For me it's a way that I connect to the earth, and the sky, and my ancestors, and all these people in the audience with energies that are vibrating all the time, because we are all music. All of us are vibrating at certain frequencies, and our chakras all vibrate at a certain frequency, so I guess I can't separate meaning from music, or music from meaning. How do you feel about it?

L I think I have the opposite feeling... I can't attach meaning to music. It resonates on cultural, emotional, and physical planes, and allows for a multidimensional experience, but I can't ever permanently or solidly attach these meanings to the music. I have to always leave it open to be completely free.

A How does memory factor into that for you? Do you have memories that are attached to certain music?

L It's interesting—the more I think about it, the more schizophrenic I feel about it. I think there's some kind of disconnect between the input and the output. For example, you can remember the way a song makes you feel, but it doesn't mean that every time you hear the song you feel the same way.

A Right.

L So it’s conditional.

A Yeah, it’s conditional and it’s infinite. I think that I can’t say that music is meaningless, but I can’t say that music is meaning-specific either. It’s magical.

L It’s dangerously full of meaning.

A I like that. Dangerously.

L In the sense that it can be used in ways that it wasn’t intended to be used. It can be interpreted in a way that takes power away from you, as a musician or a performer. What about power and control?

A I’m trying to let go of control. I don’t know how you feel about it, like when we were having sound issues while we were setting up, I was ready to be like, *If that’s the way it’s going to sound, that’s the way it’s going to sound.* I don’t want to control these things too much, because then I start to have anxiety. But power? Well, I want people to access their own power because there’s a lot of disempowered people on this planet that need to be able to get that feeling back.

L In some ways it’s really easy to use music to create a voice that’s bigger than yourself. You can speak for everybody that’s listening, in a way. That’s what I mean by this schizophrenic thing, it’s like you know that the singer of the song is giving you their voice. So when you listen to it you’re singing it as well.

A Yeah, I hope so. I think that I experience music that way, and I like people to have that experience. Do you have one last thought?

L No, I’m going to leave the final thought for another day.

A Well, I just want to say thank you.

L Thank you.

erik avery
jules gimbrone



Erik Avery & Jules Gimbrone July 18th, 2014

music issues

“For me, I know that the hip-hop industry is predominantly black male dominated and although I am a black male, I fuck males and I know that that’s not really accepted and open within the hip-hop community, so I’m here to break down those barriers.” erik

E [To audience] My name is Erik Avery. I'm a gay rap artist and believe it or not, Jules actually wanted to rap alongside myself.

J Hello.

E Hi. Well, it's so nice to meet you as we already met before.

J Nice to meet you. That was amazing. Thank you for being here and giving all your energy. That was incredible and so beautiful. I don't think anyone's ever done that for me before.

E I'm glad to say that I'm your first, now! That means a lot. So, why don't you start off by telling me as an artist about your background and what you try to convey in your work.

J I think that with my work, how it is right now, I'm really invested in something that feels simultaneously poetic and symbolic while also evoking a physical presence in the body with sound. There's just endless ways that sound does that and that's why I find it so fascinating to work with.

I see it as wide open, like the bass from your track feels to me very similar to what was happening with the vibrations through this chair or something, and it all ends up in the same place and this place we can't really define or have real clarity about.

I think that that's something I'm really trying to just totally open up to as an artist. How about you?

E I spent my entire life growing up admiring female rappers and just how in-your-face and unapologetic they are about their sexuality. Just super brazen and crazy. For me, I know that the hip-hop industry is predominantly black male dominated and although I am a black male, I fuck males and I know that that's not really accepted and open within the hip-hop community, so I'm here to break down those barriers and show you, like, "Hey, yeah, I might be really gay but I can also rap you under the table." Yeah, that's pretty much it.

J Do you feel like there's a feminine power to what you do?

E Oh, my God, yeah. Actually, if it wasn't 98.5 degrees today, I would be in drag but, *girl*, ain't nobody got time for that! It was way too hot. I took the train here and I was like, *bitch*. Usually, I don't have a problem with that, but I have to wait until the sun goes down and my lighting is together. Harsh lighting and drag, that's a no-no.

J I mean, I don't really like to talk about gender or power as a binary but there is something important, I think, in claiming a feminine power especially as a rap artist as opposed to a masculine power.

E Yeah, definitely.

J What is the difference for you, do you think?

E The difference for me is empowerment. I mean, if I can go to a gay or straight, whatever kind of venue, and just have women or men be like, "Yo, that was very empowering and I stand for what you do," then that's the icing on the cake for me. Not only that, I mean, there's a gaggle of female MC's in the rap game whereas the number of men is ten-fold and I think it's unfair. I think sometimes women or "gay rappers" are looked at like jokes or they're not taken as seriously as they should be because of their gender or their sexuality, and I think that that's bullshit being that this is the year 2014. Ultimately, I'd love to just shadow that and be like, "Yo, you can be this or that or the other, and you can still rap." I mean, it should not be so exclusive to whatever kind of class or whatever.

J You used the word 'empowerment', is that for others?

E For others. Definitely not for myself [laughs]. It's really gratifying to see people, even people that don't have the same views or don't live the same lifestyle that I do, to be like, "Oh, my God, that's amazing." At the end of the day, it's all about empowering mainly women and also other gay rappers that are like, "Bitch, I want to do this, too." It's like an influx of that right now and it's slowly but surely gaining a lot of notoriety and popularity.

J How do you feel like you use your body in your practice?

E Well, on the first half, I have the guys that I'm usually trying to sleep with, with my dresses and all that good stuff, but on the other half, there's always like two different sides of the crowd or two different dynamics. I've noticed a lot of people that are like really distant and they look really scared. It's like, "Bitch, I'm not going to bite you. I'm wearing eyelashes." You know what I mean? Or there are the people that are right up front and they're vibing with it and I think you can use your body as an instrument to convey fear or excitement, and that's usually what I do.

J You definitely have a feeling of it when you're used, like you said, like a tool, or an instrument.

E It definitely adds to it. It's part of the whole package. Even today, it feels different not being in drag because I turn into a whole different person. It brings out different elements of your personality and definitely, when I write these songs, I have my alter ego in mind. I mean, but *girl*, it was just way too hot today.

J So, you said alter ego. What does that mean for you?

E I guess from the time I wake up to about 7 PM or whenever the sun goes down, I'm Erik Avery, but after that, Erika Kayne comes out and *she's very take-no-prisoners, don't come for me, cut-a-bitch* type of bitch. I hear some laughing and I encourage that, okay? Do you want to laugh, girl? Let it all out. That's who comes out when I'm performing live. Erika Kayne is actually inspired by an Aaliyah song back in 2003 or 2004. I'll tell people, "Oh, my drag name's Erika Kayne", and they're like, "That's a character on General Hospital or One Life to Live" or some shit like that and I'm like, "I don't know the bitch, honey!" Aaliyah introduced me to her and brings her on like, "She'll make an honest man steal from his folks. She'll drain a rich man until he goes broke. She's Erika Kayne." I was like, "Oh, girl, that needs to be me, honey." Not all vindictive, but she's a fierce bitch. With Erika Kayne, I expect to be treated like this.

J You wouldn't say the same stuff in the 10 to 7 day?

E Well, I mean, I can be fierce but Erika Kayne takes it to a whole other level. Hey, so I've noticed listening to some of your work, it's very atmospheric and minimal. Could you explain that to me and how you go about creating that?

J I think that in the past, I've made more traditional music with a large ensemble or I have many things happening. It's sometimes maximal, very large, lots of stuff, notes, and instruments. I think that it's just about getting down to an essential experience of sound and almost like what is the minimum I need to have a full experience, because sometimes you don't need as much as you think you do or something. Sometimes, you do. I don't know.

I think that, for example, in exploring these different objects, it's really interesting to have just a very minimum palate in which the objects are then sounded through or the body is sounded through. Because when you have too many things happening that you can't even hear the object, you just hear all the varied colors, so there's something about trying to hone in on an experience.

The truth is when I make something, it's usually huge and there's lots of parts and I always have to strip them down because there are too many things. It's not like I'm a minimalist in other areas of my life. It's actually the opposite maybe, so it's really like the de-cluttering has to happen to do things.

I have a lot of stuff in my house.

E Who would you say are some of your influences as far as artists that are making sounds today?

J Everyone in this series.

E Oh, that's awesome.

J I'm just really excited to hear new things and be a part of new things. I'm so excited about this space because often there's so many different ways of experiencing sound and music. What happens when you give the gift of this experience to one other person? What does that mean for the experience, for the person? This kind of exchange is really exciting for me.

E So, you stated earlier that you started off with really big compositions with a lot of different sounds. So how did you go from that style or structure to what you do today?

J I think it's just like whatever I'm interested in at the moment. Today, I wanted to strip it down just for you. The chair, and this piece of metal and just get to this basic exchange. But in other pieces, I'll have many more things or people. It depends really but when you're in the studio, you're just like, "I don't need this. I don't need that. I don't need this. I just need this, this thing."

E I was noticing it felt really almost like otherworldly, especially the noise that the sheet of metal was making. It was like crazy re-verb and almost sounded like something you'd hear in an outer-space themed movie. What would you say draws you to the certain elements that you use for your performances?

J My interest in metal is getting a visceral kind of experience out of the sheet and the sound passing through. It's also this very beautiful symbolic gesture where the sound and the apparatus that I use to make the sound is actually moving the molecules of this thing to make it sound the way it does. I'm really interested in the way that sound can enter a body or an object and move things around and then move away. It's like this energy, this spirit, this ghost, this queerness that I feel like is traveling always and how it has become visible, or audible. It's why metal is a great conduit for that.

“I’m really interested in the way that sound can enter a body or an object and move things around and then move away. It’s like this energy, this spirit, this ghost, this queerness that I feel like is travelling always and how it has become visible, or audible.” Jules

E [To audience] Thank you guys for coming. You guys are awesome for being here and this is a beautiful project. I’m honored to have been a part of this and so nice meeting you. You’re awesome.

J Yeah, nice meeting you, too.

E Thank you.



music issues

David James Paha & Anthony Ibarra Michael Anthony Ibarra July 18, 2014



michael anthony ibarra
david James paha

"It's sound and body and it's all the same thing and listening. Listening is the most important thing in anything I do. I want to listen." michael

DAVID JAMES PAHA Can you hear me?

MICHAEL ANTHONY IBARRA Yes.

D Excellent. So, you consider yourself a jazz-noise musician.

M I don't consider myself... I like jazz. I like noise. I like to play them at the same time sometimes.

D How did the two come into your life? Which came first?

M Noise, believe it or not. Punk came first like a lot of people my age. Hip-hop. Jazz came after, but certain types first.

D That's pretty cool. I would have assumed that the jazz came first. How does training come into play with that? Because you would think that noise is considered anti-training or rejection of training.

M Noise requires a lot of equipment, so there's the training. There's training to learn the equipment.

D A pawnshop training.

M Pawnshop training, thrift store training. I mean, they're both listening arts. They're both very traditional. Even noises are tradition at this point in 2014. There's an envelope we've got to push and the cool thing about those genres, if you want to call them that, is that the tradition is to push the envelope so that we have to. Otherwise, what's the point?

D That's an interesting concept. Do you find yourself pushing your own envelopes? If so, what kind?

M I'd like to. I try to challenge myself. Well it's a challenge just to practice every day, isn't it?

D Yes.

M You play guitar, right?

D I am a guitar player.

M Right, so then you've got to learn your gear for your instruments and even your computer, so that's training, you know? That's how you push your boundaries, by the discipline. The discipline is how you push your boundaries.

D Most definitely, excellent.

M Where are you from?

D I'm from Chicago. I've only been in Los Angeles for two years or so. I just graduated from Cal-Arts.

M Did you study with Charlie Haden? May he rest in peace.

D No, no, I didn't but, yeah, excellent, excellent musician. I never had the chance to actually hang with him but I studied with an equally awesome musician, Mark Trail. During our classes, we just listened to Soundgarden and soldered, things together...[laughs]

M I could hear it in the way that you compose. It made me want to get up in there and participate in the sound.

D I would have really enjoyed that. I like the idea of participation. I want people to feel it more within their body instead of just sitting and listening to it. Less like standing around at the club and more of the body...

M Do you feel that that's part of your responsibility as a musician?

D Responsibility is a tough wormhole to go down especially with music.

M That's a poor choice of words on my part. I don't even know why the hell I said that. I just had to keep the conversation flowing [laughs].

D I think it's more of a responsibility to be as open as possible and to let people find their own way into things, so that's that. But going back to you, you're a sleek dude. You've got the whole look going on right here.

M The thing is I could never pull off the outfit that you have on, because if I was wearing your outfit, that shit just wouldn't work. Pardon my french, but that would never work on me. I have to be a sleek dude because I have a certain stature and gray hair.

D It is the most important topic I needed to bring up here.

M I don't know. The most important topic I think was what we talked about before, our use of our middle names as our handles, like you're David James Paha and I'm Michael Anthony Ibarra.

D I'm thinking about adding more names between the two right there.

M You should become an actor.

D Seriously though, you're an actor as well.

M I am.

“I like the idea of participation. I want people to feel it more within their body instead of just sitting and listening to it. Less like standing around at the club and more of the body...” david

D How do you find that interfacing the two? How does the body play into the sound to you?

M It's sound and body and it's all the same thing and listening. Listening is the most important thing in anything I do. I want to listen.

D Someone told me that the new virtuosity is listening.

M I hope so because I won't have a job if it's not the new virtuosity because I don't have another virtuosity. I mean, they'll tell you out there behind the scrim.

D We left the virtuosity on the other side of the scrim.

M The first time I saw you was out on the Hollywood Boulevard I was like, Who is this farmer coming up to me?

D I should have asked you for some change, actually. I need you to pay the car meter...

M It's great to hear your work.

D Thank you. Thanks for playing for me.



archie carey
molly allis
jenica anderson



Archie Carey &
Molly Allis
& Jenica Anderson
July 18, 2014



music issues

ARCHIE CAREY Hi, Molly.

MOLLY ALLIS Hey, Archie.

A How's it going?

M I feel washed in good vibes. How about you, Jenica?

JENICA ANDERSON Yeah, it's really, really amazing.

M Yeah, I've never actually watched anyone play the bassoon before. It was a pretty mind-blowing experience for me.

J How'd you figure out that your bassoon is also a didgeridoo?

A I know. It's a good two-for-one.

M I want to hear how you experienced your own performance.

A I've done this piece a few times in a few different ways, but I feel like it came about just because I have to put my bassoon together every day. Sometimes I like to play the different pieces. Each piece can really make a different unique sound.

M What's the name of the type of bassoon it is?

A It's a fox bassoon.

M Is it the biggest kind?

A There's actually a contrabassoon also, which is twice as big and twice as low.

J It's interesting, you found ways to take this really classical instrument, playing excerpts beforehand just to sound check and then find a way to be creative inside of it. I think you did it really well.

A Thank you.

J It's interesting to see exploration on something that you've clearly played a really long time.

A The thing that's fun about exploration is it's not meant to do that exactly, so it can go wrong. It's like a science experiment. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I know how the bassoon works as a classical instrument, but I feel like every time I do a performance like this, I take a risk and I say, maybe it won't work but maybe it'll turn into something. It always evolves in that way.

M When you're playing, it seems very meditative. It's very soothing to experience. Is there a certain narrative that's going on when you're hearing or making these sounds visually? Are you going through a visual journey?

J No, not really. I feel like with this specific instrument and performance it's a lot more about focusing on the simple sounds and everything that comes out of them.

M Did you have any visuals while you were listening to that? Because I did.

J No, but I really like the harmonics. It's really cool, really different.

A What about you guys? Do you have visual thoughts when you're playing music?

M Yeah [laughs]. I think this is very traditional but I guess I do really think of singing songs as a very straightforward form of storytelling. For me, there are visuals that accompany the song like it's a little movie or music video. That's part of why I like to close my eyes when I play. It's like I can watch the video in my head. How about you?

J I'm more about tasks in that... I want to figure out how to fit certain things into this musical mold. For example, Molly writes really amazing pop chants, which inspires me to integrate my own instrument into them. That's the exploration that's interesting for me.

A It sounds like you guys are really connected. Even your voices sound like they could be the same voice, the harmonies and everything, which is really nice. Even when I heard the recordings on that, I thought maybe it was just you overdubbing. It was pretty amazing.

M I guess I'm drawn to lullabies. Like with rounds, they're kind of soothing and hypnotic and lull you, so sometimes that's the vibe that we're putting out. Did you write your own piece?

A Yeah. I just made it up right now a little bit. I've done similar things before. I did write a piece a few years ago that involved me taking all the instrument pieces out of its own case and I called it The Organism, as if the bassoon is an organism and all the pieces are the

different organs that come together to form it as a whole. After that performance I've been messing around with playing the different pieces and using different orders for different improvisations.

M I guess, we should maybe ask the body question because we both have some shared feelings about the body and performance.

A Coming from classical music, so much of the body thing is about everyone wearing the same thing. You've got the tuxedo with the bowtie on. It's almost like you're not a human. You're just a vessel for music written by someone hundreds of years ago. I feel like that's ingrained in my training like, Oh, I'm just this music-making thing. I don't really like it but I do feel like it remains in my thought process somewhere. But for some of my music, at least especially this piece, the visuals are important because you can see all these different things and you see that it's a bassoon, it's not a computer. It aids in the interest or what might be inspiring to someone else. What are your thoughts?

M Yeah, I appreciate there being a scrim here in the space [laughs]. I started out as a drummer and I feel very uninhibited as a drummer, but then singing, it's like I'd rather be invisible or just have people close their eyes and listen in the dark because I think singing is such an intimate thing. And also what you're talking about, the vessel thing, like wanting to just put something out to the audience that's not about you and not about your own identity, it's coming from somewhere else. In that sense, I think it would be cool to be invisible when I performed but I can't do that. I do close my eyes, which can make me feel invisible. I don't know. Do you have body feelings?

J [laughs] Yeah, I don't know. In respect to this performance, Jules's instructions were like, you're playing for each other behind the scrim, and so I really tried to stay true to that. I started to feel like we were in a house somewhere and we were just watching you do this crazy amazing performance.

A Cool. Thanks so much, you guys.

M Thank you, Archie.

Odeya Nini &
Oscar Miguel Santos
(Sister Mantos)
July 26th, 2014

music issues



odeya nini
oscar miguel santos

"I want the listener and audience to have to question what they hear and find their own meaning from the abstraction. I want them to question the meaning of validity in general. I want them to question how we got into this habit of equating everything..." odeya

ODEYA NINI First of all, I really loved what you were doing. I just love everything I've seen you do.

OSCAR MIGUEL SANTOS Same to you.

ON You're just so honest and approachable. It completes your picture. You're not a too cool artist who doesn't know how to communicate with words, thank you for being really awesome.

OMS Thank you.

ON The song you sang today was really interesting. I understand a little bit of Spanish but can you tell me what those lyrics meant?

OMS I wrote that song right around 2012 when the world was supposed to end. "Dicen que el mundo se va a acabar" translates to "people are saying that the world is going to end." Then "Fin Del Mundo" is the name of the song, so it's just about this idea of apocalypse and about how I was idealizing an apocalypse where all the terrible things in the world would disappear. It talked about how if the world is going to end, let it end racism, sexism and homophobia and violence, with the United States and with capitalism. It's really basic.

ON So when the world come to an end, the US should be one of the first things to go?

OMS Yeah. There's a lot of beautiful things about the USA and there's a lot of really terrible, disgusting, horrible, oppressive things about the USA.

ON But isn't that the nature of all things? Everything has both the good and the bad in it. It's important to make peace with both of those sides and find a way for the forces of darkness to see the light. Can you talk about the "ayah" chant in the chorus of the song?

OMS It was just one of those things that happened naturally. Actually, that song came up as a jam I was playing with my friends Christine Kings and Mike Wait, and we were just jamming and that's the vocal that came out. It's a natural chant, a little bit of a cry, I guess. There's a little bit of that in there.

ON It's interesting because in Hebrew, "ayah" is what you say when someone hurts you, you would say "Ayah! That hurt!." It's very relevant to all the terrible things that are going on right now in the world. We all want to cry out: "Ayah! let this end please."

When listening to your other music, a lot of the lyrics are really light and fun and about love and relationships on a rather surface level, but then you have other work on a totally different spectrum and level of depth. Your performance art is very different, dealing with issues that are much darker and a lot more complicated, which might still be the subject of love. Love is very complicated! I just wonder how you see the different work that you do. Do you feel you have two completely different artistic personalities, or do you see them as having a close relationship.

OMS Actually, yeah. They are like two personalities but almost like a river that splits up. It's the same energy, it's just like a little Delta where the identity splits up but then comes back together.

With the performance work, I've tended to be really driven by a conceptual idea that is usually rooted in some political statement. It could be like a social statement, but related to my experience, too.

As an immigrant person growing up in LA, being very privileged in some ways I also had to deal with a lot of the realities of racism and classism. So yeah, the work is fueled by that because I was lucky enough to go to art school and live the dream of making art and stuff, but then also reflecting on myself and reflecting on the fact that many times in an art classroom in college, I'd be the only person of color in the room or galleries and stuff. That has pushed the performance work I think. I'm always reflecting on that. Then musically, that's also influencing me too, but I've been using the pop vernacular to make people dance.

I want to perform, I want people to dance and have fun, but the songs also have the dark side. Even on the songs you heard, out of the seven songs, five of them are love songs and then two of them are more social, political songs. I try to sneak it in there and weave in and out of that.

ON The melodies and the rhythms that you performed today, they're familiar and pleasing in a way. The other side of you seems to set out to displease. It seems you are just doing your thing not concerned with people feeling pleasure or pain.

You have a video where your hands, legs and mouth are tied up and you're in a children's park. There's a certain humor and that's a through line in your work, even when it's really dark.

OMS It's a very dark video, yeah.

ON Maybe you can tell me about that, about your thoughts. Was that intentional or was that something that happened because it just came to be?

OMS It's both. It's definitely intentional in that I've picked out heavy topics like the videos that we're talking about. For one of them, I had researched a massacre that happened in the United States during the time of an Indian removal act when President Andrew Jackson forcibly pushed native people out of their land.

I ended up creating a documentary about it, but also ended up singing in the video. It's intentional that there are these juxtapositions that can also end up somewhat humorous.

Humor is the garnish on the plate. I'm not trying to make fun of the issues at all, it's more about not making it completely bleak and terrible, and also trying to connect and bring people into the work, and then make them freak out.

Since it's just a short amount of time, I'll just tell you all the things I thought about your work and then you can choose. I was listening to your sounds on SoundCloud and your videos. One of the things that I found really cool is how you can transform your voice into something that sounds synthetic. There were moments when I was listening and I was like, "Is that a human voice? Because I can't tell." That's a thought if you want to talk about that.

I also noticed that you don't really have that much lyrical content in the vocal and I was wondering if that has something to do with a negation of language necessarily or is it again just something that happens?

ON They're related. My background definitely comes from singing. We grow up learning to sing songs, not to be experimental vocalists. I definitely sang for a very long time and then got to a point where I felt like there was more to singing. I felt like people weren't really listening deeply enough.

The questions of listening and sound and how we interpret sound and how we listen to one another, how we interpret language and how we understand one another, those all came up for me. The work I do now is searching for ways to redefine what we're familiar with. I want the listener and audience to have to question what they hear and find their own meaning from the abstraction. I want them to question the meaning of validity in general. I want them to question how we got into this habit of equating everything to something like, "This equals this, this equals that, this equals this." It's so gray

and there are so many different sides to everything and that's what I was seeing earlier with your work, too. As an artist, I really want to show a different side of expression that is not just words. Words are easy to comprehend, but the non verbal forces you to have to create your own understanding and, even more importantly, realize that you're choosing how you understand something. Then we apply that to other parts of our lives and take little sidesteps when something doesn't go the way we want it to. We can let things pass or look at them differently, understand them differently.

We were talking about politics and how our work is political. In a way, that's maybe how my work is political. My statement is, "Let's not just listen to words. Let's read bodies and interpret things in many different ways because there's always more than two sides. There are many sides and we just have to find the balance."

OMS With your music and your sounds, I keep getting the sense of this intensity and this darkness in there. There is a light side, but there's definitely like this heavy, brooding vibe and I was wondering if that's something that guides you, or is intentional, or if it comes from a certain location, either historically or otherwise? I was also interested in how you use silence and how it becomes one of the colors you're painting with.

ON It's definitely about range, the full range. I think that we are stuck in a society in a very narrow range of the way we see and go about things. There's so much more that we can access.

I feel like if I could expand my understanding and my seeing of the world, expand that range to something huge, from extreme drama and darkness to the beauty of silence, the stillness and the nothingness, then I can see things in a clear way and I can shift through that range with different places to settle in.

Also not being afraid of darkness. Therapeutically, if I can get to that place where I'm really dark and I'm really, really embodying a certain kind of pain or emotion, then it moves through me and I think, "Okay, it's just an emotion. Why are we so afraid of being dark and being in pain? Great, done. Now, I'm moving on to something else." It's cool, we don't have to take things so literally when we feel them. It happens and it moves and things are always moving and shifting and changing. With my work, with my composition this are constantly suddenly changing. It comes from a place of having more movement in our way of thinking and our way of being. Movement and shifting is inherent in everything, I believe.

“Humor is the garnish on the plate. I’m not trying to make fun of the issues at all, it’s more about not making it completely bleak and terrible, and also trying to connect and bring people into the work, and then make them freak out.” oscar

OMS Awesome. One thing I’d say from our conversation is that I think it’s interesting how we’re both trying to get to this area of dealing with the range of topics, heavy or not, and it’s funny that you’re using a non-verbal way to get there and I’m using a pop song to get there. It’s interesting, it’s like two doors to get to the same place, or something like that, and it’s cool.

ON What we have in common, too, is that we know how to place different personalities and parts of ourselves where they belong. Just talking to you, I didn’t feel like I had to carry some kind of artistic personality. You’re very accessible and I feel like I’ve made that effort too.

I think about that consciously. I just want to be a sweet, kind, communicable person to people and not carry a persona. I don’t feel like you carry any kind of persona, even though your persona is extremely strong when you perform. I really appreciate that because that can alienate a lot of people. I think that you’re really trying to communicate.

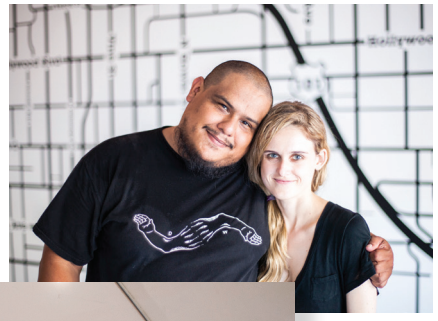
OMS I would say the same for you. Watching your videos, I got that feeling. I was able to enter into this space with you through the abstraction that you are creating. Awesome. Thank you.



dorian wood
claire cronin

Dorian Wood & Claire Cronin

July 26,
2014



music issues

DORIAN WOOD We sprout our own little flowers today.

CLAIRE CRONIN Yes, we have our little flower offerings on the floor. I found mine outside of my apartment. That was really beautiful especially to hear it stripped down.

D Thank you.

C I've been listening to the one on your album and the lyrics are so haunting, and I feel like we were drawn to a lot of the same specific images about our lives, too.

D It seems that way. I really love the imagery that you conjured up in your poem. There's this warm comfort, oddly enough, and themes that are opaque by nature, like snow and fog and winter that are generally associated with some sort of misery or sorrow.

I did really find a kinship in that kind of approach. There are many wonderful things that can be uncovered in themes of that nature especially in the context of Saint Therese with the little flowers.

She was always referred to as this vibrant person with an almost overwhelming innocence. She stayed in Carmel, France under very harsh weather conditions in the convent and she was always seen as very warm and radiated that kind of just ...

C ...Acting sort of child-like, but amidst this really intense sort of spiritual philosophy that seemed like it was very much born out of her experiences of suffering and grief.

D That is really remarkable. I guess there's so many reasons why people eventually become saints and it just seems that she wasn't interested in that. She was so enamored with Jesus and wanting to get close to him, almost like this childhood crush that my sister had on Kirk Cameron when we were growing up. Like, here was this heartthrob that you wouldn't find in Bop Magazine, but instead someone that she eventually sacrificed her entire life to be closer to by joining the convent and leaving her father pretty much by himself, ultimately just to be closer to Jesus. It's fascinating.

C I agree, and I felt like it was really hard in writing the poem to not make it just a narrative biographical about her and not a religious poem. Not like a poem setting her forth being like, "She

was canonized, isn't this great?" but also not being cynically distant from it. It would be so easy in another voice to be ironic about this kind of asceticism.

I feel very emotionally connected to her story. I'm trying to honor her but also treat her as a figure for something else, if possible.

D I can totally tell that, too, in the way the entire poem unfolds. It really strikes me almost as lifted from perhaps your journal in some sort of way that it's very much telling a story that we don't really know the nuances of, but at the same time you're laying down something that is very powerful and almost taking this story again of an era long gone but adapting it in a way to a parallel to your life. To me, that's really fascinating to do something like that. It's remarkable.

C Thank you. Do you want to play any other songs for me or ...

Do you want to play?

C Sure. We'll do that.

"I've been listening to the one on your album and the lyrics are so haunting, and I feel like we were drawn to a lot of the same specific images about our lives, too." claire



"We sprout our own little flowers today." dorian





todd lerew
kevin robinson

"I'd like to think of playing a lot as a meditation and a way to explore things I'm feeling, like narratives, raw emotion, distinct emotions like things I'm specifically thinking about. I'm really interested in thinking about being conscious of what I'm thinking about while I'm playing, what I'm feeling." Kevin



Todd
Kevin
July 27,

music issues

TODD LEREW: I'll explain the setup here a little bit for everybody else in the room before we start talking about it. What's happening here is a process called bone conduction, in which a sound transducer is placed directly on Kevin's head, essentially allowing the sound waves to travel through the bones of his head and into his ear canal. Kevin is also wearing earplugs and headphones that are playing a very loud noise so that he can't hear anything that's happening in the room. Can you talk a little bit about what that feels like or how it's different from a traditional listening environment?

KEVIN ROBINSON: It definitely feels like your voice is coming from within and is really isolated inside of me. I am trying to hear other noises outside of this voice inside of me, and it's really interesting because I can see other people, I can see things happening, and I think I'm expecting to hear it but I'm not. It's very encapsulating.

T It's sort of the opposite effect: if you ever hear your own voice recorded and then play it back it's somehow disembodied because what's removed in that case is the bone conduction that you normally always hear. Now, you're only hearing your own voice through bone conduction and not through air. Does that sound different than normally speaking?

K Yeah. It feels like I want to speak really loudly to hear myself. I'm quite sure I'm being heard. Yeah, it definitely feels like an out of body experience.

T Try moving the transducer around to the other temple and down lower, behind your ear. Does it sound different in those positions?

K Yes. It's more behind me, more peripheral, not as directly coming to me. Behind my ear, the sound is much quieter. Very faint.

T Try your jaw. Try it while I'm speaking. Open and close your mouth, like push your teeth together and open again. Do you notice any difference in the sound that way?

K Open, it appears to be like a vacuum, like I can sense this air coming through. Your voice sounds kind of shallower.

T Okay. I'm going to hand you one more implement here to do one more test if you'll humor me. I'll have you take this metal and put the transducer on the piece of metal and bite it if you don't mind. Can you hear me at all through that?

K Yes.

T Push it further. Bite with the sides of your teeth further back into your mouth. Is it different in some way?

K It's kind of like behind my ears I feel it happening, like your voice coming from behind my ears and it vibrates here in my mouth. With every angle, it feels like your voice keeps going in and out, further and closer to me. Certain angles, I can't really hear anything from you, but if I keep rearranging, I can hear you again.

T I won't make you keep biting that thing. If you prefer to move it back to your head, you can...

K I'm used to having things in my mouth [laughs].

T Spatiality is an interesting thing to mess around with here. What about filtering? Have you noticed different timbral qualities based on positioning at all?

K Yeah, definitely. Placing the transducer right on my temple feels more direct. It comes right to my ears. When I'm moving it around it's kind of like I'm searching for your voice, I know it's there and I'm just trying to make sure I hear it clearly.

T While we're on the subject of embodiment and bodies and space, maybe you can say something about what you just played for us and what you were thinking.

K I'd like to think of playing a lot as a meditation and a way to explore things I'm feeling, like narratives, raw emotion, distinct emotions like things I'm specifically thinking about. Lately I've been thinking a lot about life in terms of mortality and humanity. I kind of started off just trying to let out sound and when I'm probably more relaxed I let out more of a guttural scream until I get my body to relax, and then I just kind of transverse different thoughts and let it come out through blowing and hearing the pitch as it's out there and trying to manipulate it in a certain way that reflects what I was thinking and feeling.

I'm really interested in thinking about being conscious of what I'm thinking about while I'm playing, what I'm feeling.

T Do you always play with your eyes closed?

K No, but I try to.

T What effect does that have on your playing?

K Definitely when my eyes are closed, I feel a deeper connection to what I'm doing. I feel like I'm getting out of my own way. I used to practice a lot in the dark and blindfolded to try to do a sensory deprivation thing where I take away the sight and take away any purely visual questions and try to just go inside myself, create the sound, hear the sound before it happens, feel how it travels through my body and feel how it's out in the air and try to experience it in that way.

T It seems to me that you are somehow deeply connected to a space, but maybe only through sound and not vision. Since this is such a large, resonant space, it seemed to me that what you played had a spacious quality and that you were leaving room to listen to the space interacting with what you were doing.

K I've been trying to play much slower, much more deliberately and do a lot more listening to what I hear before I play as far as a particular note or sound. It's paying a lot more attention to details like the angle of the mouthpiece, the angle I'm blowing up, going down, if I'm trying to hit the bottom of the barrel of the horn and push the air out, if I'm only trying to hit halfway through, different things, you know? I want to be even more deliberate about it so I can really hear each note.

T I've been thinking a lot recently about how we use sonic information of the spaces around us in subconscious ways. It's the same reason that it's illegal to wear headphones while driving. You need to have a kind of aural awareness; in some sense it's as important as a visual awareness.

The situation you're in now, with that being removed, you have a very different relationship to myself, the space and the general situation. I'm wondering, if you're up for it, maybe you'd like to play a little bit now without being able to hear the space, just for a couple of minutes maybe and then we can talk about how that felt different for you.

K Sure. Yeah, that would be great.

[Kevin experiments with his horn]

T Would you like to say something about how that felt?

K It felt like I was underwater. I couldn't really hear the sound. I was pretty much going on what I knew as far as the fingering I was doing and the sound that it was supposed to produce. It was a really interesting feeling, especially after playing with the resonance of the room previously, and hearing how resonant

the room is. I was kind of searching for that and trying to find it even though I knew that I probably wasn't going to make a breakthrough and hear it the way I heard it before. I think that there was a point where I tried to slow down and think about it that way and hear a pitch and try to imagine it happening the way that I heard it before, but it didn't happen.

T Commercially speaking, bone-conduction headphones are primarily marketed with the advantage that you can wear them while driving or cycling or whatever, leaving your ear canals free to also hear the environment around you. I was on a plane a few days ago and realized that I had my headphones on and I had to turn it up to full volume to be able to hear it at what sounded like a normal, comfortable level, which is weird for me, knowing that I've probably turned it up to a possibly dangerous sound pressure level. I was thinking maybe something like this current setup would be useful in a very noisy environment. The military uses it for communicating in noisy environments. I found that really interesting.

In some reviews online, people who have bought these headphones are complaining about lower fidelity. It's harder to get a wide range of frequencies or linear output. From that it led me to thinking that the idea of fidelity in itself is somehow flawed or at least it's not static, because fidelity is to say that the extent to which some kind of reproduced sound approximates a normal listening environment makes it a better sound. But there are so many factors to what constitutes a normal listening environment. In some sense, it's meaningless to say that something is more faithful or less faithful or lower quality. Of course there are different ways in which things are considered not enjoyable to listen to for poor quality and whatnot, but given that definition of fidelity, is it fair to say that your speaking voice, when played back to you, is a poor fidelity because it does not resemble your normal experience of that?

K Yes. I would definitely say so.

T I just think that's a funny thing to think about. Once you remove this assumption that we do hear things in one way, and realize that there are already all kinds of different frequency filterings in environments where we do encounter sound naturally, it becomes more elusive as to what is meant by being faithful to that.

There's something about noise and masking that creates an intimate environment. Having now lived in a city for a number of years and being constantly surrounded by noise, when I do find myself in

a very quiet environment, it's somehow unsettling because I begin to hear that my ears themselves are creating noise or the other noises of my body are escaping when normally they're masked. Can you relate to that at all? Do you think you're sometimes making music to create more noise in the world?

K Yeah. I can relate to that, especially living in big cities most of my life and then having that quiet time, I feel the same way. Even playing by myself I hear other instruments that I normally play with. I try to imagine what they would be doing. I use that as a marker or a way to help me along my playing.

I think for me also, the interesting thing about playing solo or by yourself, when you're used to playing for other people most of the time, is to hear that space that's there. That you have to be comfortable in hearing that space and comfortable hearing yourself not paired up against a particular harmony or particular rhythm that other instruments are creating.

T Okay. I think, maybe we'll leave it at that. Jules, could you turn off the transducer and the headphones?

Kevin, any final thoughts about how it feels different to be able to remove that noise and be back in the space with us? Does it feel normal right away or is it somehow different?

K It feels like I traveled, like I went somewhere. Now I'm back from the space that I've been in for the last hour and a half or whatever. I think it took like 15 seconds or so to come back to normal hearing, but I think the bone conduction started feeling normal pretty quickly.

T Was it very alien first and then became quite comfortable, or was it always feeling a little bit off?

K Yeah. It was feeling a little bit off. I wouldn't say it was really extremely discomfoting or alarming. It was just jarring to figure out where your voice was coming from but it was a quick adjustment. This has been a really interesting experience, especially talking about conditions that we're used to hearing things in, and the idea of fidelity and high and low and what these conditions mean. I've been in the process of mixing recordings and I've done that for a while. But my whole life I've been excited about tweaking what really happened and trying to take it to what people consider an ideal listening experience.

T Right. It becomes clear that there's no correct or single answer to that.

K I have recordings where I didn't fix or alter anything, keeping it purposely lo-fi, and having my audience tell me, "I can't listen to this, the quality is bad." It's interesting how that happens.

T It's very interesting for me as well. Thanks for that. Do you have any additional thoughts or questions for me?

K With this information that you have, how do you go about your listening experiences throughout your day? Are you keenly aware of these factors?

T More now than ever, I would say. Like, for example, in a concert situation, I often like to cup my ears, which not only increases volume but also changes the filtering dramatically. You get a lot more higher frequencies. But when I stop, it sounds much more dead. It's like I've ruined it for myself because then I have to stay this way since it resonates more with me. It's become a concern for me and a challenge to figure out how to present it so that it's a consideration for the audience as well.

K I had this idea, conceptually, about the canon of an instrument, the lineage of the sound. Eventually if the communal era of that instrument starts hearing a certain sound, like multiphonics or whatever, an extended technique is happening. Eventually that becomes part of the regular technique and no longer is extended. I think a lot about this in terms of the technology that's available to us now. Especially in this conversation, hearing myself and us being like, "Oh, if I can hear this way all the time," I wonder if I could find a way to reproduce that sound eventually. In some way my physical body will, if I really want to make it happen.

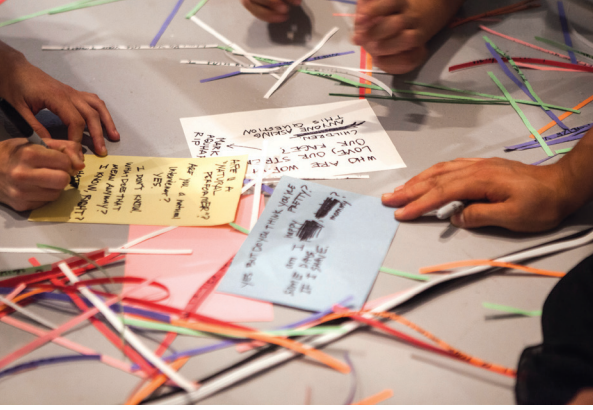
T Right. Cool.

K Thanks Todd.

T Thank you.

"I've been thinking a lot recently about how we use sonic information of the spaces around us in subconscious ways." todd



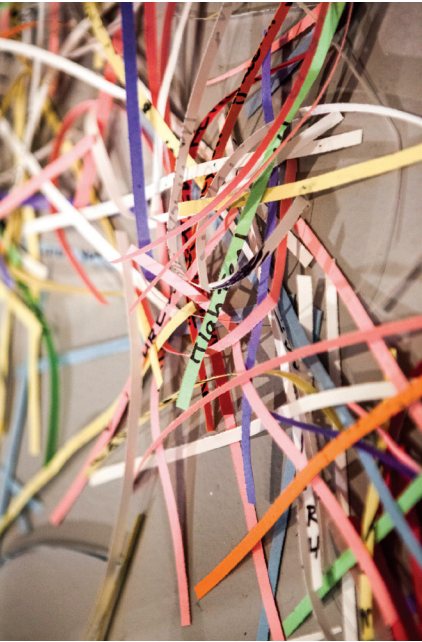


morgan lee gerstmar
xina xurner

Morgan Lee Gerstmar & Xina Xurner July 27, 2014



music issues



weba garretson
ingrid lee

It's almost like when you're a live performer, you never get the same results because the audience is always a variable, but feedback becomes a variable, just like your voice and your instrument. weba



Garretson &

Lee
27, 2014



Weba
Ingrid
July

music issues

WEBA GARRETSON* I guess we are-

INGRID LEE Polar opposites.

W Polar opposites. Because I remember the e-mail you sent, you said, "Our practices are very different," and I went, "Uh-oh." That sentence is rich because I didn't go to art school. I guess I was curious what you mean by practice.

I Just meaning what we do. You work a lot with text. I don't at all, but I just was wondering what speaks to you, how do you choose what you work with.

W Usually, what happens always is I write by myself because it's a solitary contemplative thing that I do. Then, when I collaborate with other musicians, like my partner, Ralph Gorodetsky, who wrote the music for that last piece (Mulberry Tree), he'll come in with a riff or maybe a chord progression, and I'll grab out my yellow pad and start singing.

It will either happen in something in the cadence of the text and the cadence of the music or the feeling of the music or the texture of it. There's just something happens, some greater than the parts. I like songs, but I feel like what we just did was a song.

I Yeah, absolutely.

W I like things that have a beginning and a middle and an end, or have something. Even if they're abstract, they're about something.

I That's good. I want to talk a bit about performance because you've performed a lot in a lot of different contexts. I just wanted to know, in between the conception of the song and the first performance of the song, what changes does the actual song go through, if there are any at all?

w A lot of changes, but I think sometimes you try to get back to the initial spirit that was there when you made the song, because sometimes it's the best work, but, often, I find that — and maybe this is a musician thing — I often write stuff that I can't sing. It's like this obstacle course of trying to make my instrument do what my head and my imagination has built. That's my practice.

Then there's also, I think, when you're doing performance (I've done really desperate kinds of performance, from very campy, very ironic to very heartfelt to extremely physical and abstract) the rehearsal process, obviously, just makes everything deeper. The thought of something on a superficial level and grabbing and



working through it; you see the resonances in the work and you work towards focusing the idea and getting it to that level.

I Sure. My writing process is basically a constant rehearsal from beginning to end.

I'm mostly just playing with things and seeing if it works. Often, it doesn't work from beginning to end, but it's still an interesting idea anyway, like this piece that I just played. It usually is more active, but because I'm using feedback, such a finicky instrument because it depends on space, on materials, the surrounding environment and people, that I'm never going to get the same results.

W That's what's satisfying. It's almost like when you're a live performer, you never get the same results because the audience is always a variable, but feedback becomes a variable, just like your voice and your instrument.

When I watched you work, to me, it's like you're tuning these sort of things that I don't even hear. I always wanted to ask you about how you feel like you're physical or you use your body in your music-making. It's because you're not sitting there playing the piano or plucking strings and, yet-

I No, it's not a very active performance.

W Yeah because you have to be attuned to vibrations and very subtle things.

I Definitely. I've only recently seen ears as an instrument just because of how we process sound. It's obviously a very important factor in the way that we perform and listen to music.

This piece is actually called Listening Etude. It is about tuning to the frequencies that the feedback produces and also, in turn, affecting the frequencies.

A lot of my work has been going in that kind of direction. It has been very much influenced by experiments and listening.

W Deep listening. Is it Pauline Oliveros who did Deep Listening?

I Yeah.

W To me, because I haven't studied this kind of music that you're doing, but I've been to a lot and I've seen a lot. I find that you're developing these really beautiful harmonies because you're find-

ing the frequency of the feedback. Then you're working against it or with it in creating these clusters of tones. It's quite beautiful, but then, see, I love harmony. It's my bias.

I I wanted to ask more about performance. You've done a lot of different things. You've played a lot in different bands. The way that you perform, you still keep a certain aesthetic even while you're performing in different contexts. I wanted to know how performance affects the way that you see and think and perceive the world outside of a performance context?

W You mean in terms of doing performance?

I Yes, just because when you're performing, you're entering a completely different space. I wonder if that affects the way that you see the world.

W I think it affects how I exist in the world. I think I exist in the world and survive in the world because I do performance. I think that, to me, it's like a necessity.

I feel that the impulse is always the same. The aesthetic might be different, but the impulse is to make a language, to have a shorthand, to cultivate that with the collaborators so that you can arrive at a place very quickly and you can go very far.

That shorthand is a code, a certain formal set of rules that you have, if you're making any kind of music or performance.

I found that when I perform with SHRIMPS which was all physical performance, we would sit and talk for an hour and then we would get up and move, but we really knew how to just go there. When I was working with Joe Baiza and Ralph Gorodetsky and doing punk rock stuff, we had a formula, a way of putting songs together that gave us what we wanted, gave us the musical high points, the intensity.

I feel like music and performance are just kind of like this in me, but it is about that shorthand. What we did today was kind of about that, just leaping in.

I Definitely. I enjoyed that very much.

W What happened when you grew up as a pianist? Were you classically trained?

I I was definitely classically trained.

W Uh-huh. Did you have this moment when you just threw the piano out the window or was it this gradual thing where you became interested in more ... what's the term?

I Noisy stuff I guess. Yeah. I definitely have been, but I've always had a difficult relationship with the piano, as most musicians do with their instruments. It's just that everything about the piano is so against what I believe in in music now, so I put that to the side. Although I do enjoy playing Bach every now and again. I do still teach piano, which I find a bit hypocritical, but it's okay. It's a way of living.

I actually wanted to quit piano at the end of high school. I went to CalArts for composition, but then one of my teachers convinced me to pick it up again, so I did. I went through a period where I was really interested in new music - new music being more modernist music, really complex stuff.

Then I gradually got turned on to more fluxus and noise scenes. Again, listening to and talking and reading more about that kind of stuff. It made much more sense to me to treat sounds the way that these people do.

W As something worth listening to, or composing with?

I Not always worth listening to all the time.

W Because you used the phrase, and I thought it was pretty amazing...Influenced by Ideas of Failure and Hybridity Through the Use of Illegitimate and Inconsequential Sounds. That's very loaded.

I Yeah. I'm very interested in sounds of failure and ideas of failure. This occurs in my work in various ways. Sometimes it's forced, sometimes it's a very safe failure, and sometimes it's more dangerous, like my use of feedback which is a sound that most musicians don't want or the sound of detuning or being "out of tune". These are sounds that I love. It's sort of carrying on the legacy of noise and glitch, using the sounds of everyday life that people don't really pay attention to or that they really dislike, and composing with it. Because I find that, although this idea spend several decades, it's still very relevant.

W Yeah. For me, I feel like you're more of a purist because you have very strong feelings about the politics of it, that your aesthetics aren't just what makes you happy. There's a real reason for it.

I I would say so, yeah. Although I also change my mind when I can.

“Yeah. I’m very interested in sounds of failure and ideas of failure. This occurs in my work in various ways. Sometimes it’s forced, sometimes it’s a very safe failure, and sometimes it’s more dangerous, like my use of feedback which is a sound that most musicians don’t want or the sound of detuning or being “out of tune”. These are sounds that I love” Ingrid

W You’re fickle. I think, for me, it’s really interesting to work with you because I so often, especially when I teach singing, it’s all about being pitched correct and being rhythmically correct, especially with popular music. It’s very rigid, unforgiving to the point where auto-tune is the only thing that people really want to hear when they turn on the radio. The soul of the voice is being evaporated. I feel like it’s a constant struggle to not be seduced by that.

I By perfection?

W Yeah. I think that’s the desire to please and also the vanity of it. It’s really great to be in a situation where you have to shed that and not have everything figured out.

I I just want to say one more thing. I think appreciating failure allows you to use these ugly noises in different ways and actually think about music alternatively ... About music-making in alternative ways. I think that’s interesting.

W Right. I think that corresponds to being willing to do that with the voice. It’s just another tool box of sounds to play with.

I Absolutely. Yeah. All right. Thank you so much.

W Cool, man. It was great to meet you.



A DISEMBODIED IMPOSTOR. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ROSSEN VENTZISLAVOV & DORIAN WOOD

ROSSEN VENTZISLAVOV:

I've known you for less than a year now, but your music has managed to carve a space of its own in my life. I distinctly remember the first time I heard "Appleheart" from your first album, Bolka. I was stunned by the lyric "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Dorian Wood." What does he mean? Why introduce himself in the third person? I thought it was a powerful gesture to pull the curtain on oneself. An acknowledgment of the thin line between music-making and performance art. You've done a good deal of both but is there one that takes decisive priority?

DORIAN WOOD:

They are the same for me. Even as a listener I can't separate my private circumstances from the public nature of a recording. That's probably why art tends to bring people together. It fuses the personal with the social. As you just said, it carves a space of its own. I'm always touched when someone acknowledges that kind of intimate relationship with my work. That's why the overlap, maybe. In my music, writing and performing are of a piece. No pun intended. (Laughs heartily.)

R What about performances that have little to do with music? Some of the art you make and participate in is

not sound based at all. You've worked with performance art luminaries like Mariel Carranza and Rafa Esparza but rarely in a musical capacity.

D Yeah, but I still don't see these things as separate. Both as a musician and as a performance artist I draw from the same intuitive place.

R I'm also thinking of that song of yours that has five minutes of silence in the middle. I haven't seen you perform it but I'd be curious what you do with that break. Is it meant as a reminder that even silence is musical? Or is it just a palate cleanser?

D I don't know what it does for others but I suspect that silence is always mythical—it's a monolith from which we are free to carve all kinds of figures. The hidden track in the song you're referring to is music for those who dwell on music. Literally. Strange things happen to those who wait. The performance art stuff is similar because it requires a bit of dwelling, a kind of surrender really. And, yes, I think all art forms are by default about performance, be they musical or not.

R Do you feel the same amount of comfort when you do a performance art piece as you do when you perform your music?

D Hahahaha! Comfort is not what it's all about at all. I guess abandon is more like it. But there's no difference either way. Both are forms of expression and the source of expression in both cases is the same person. Unless you're schizophrenic or something. I've been assured I'm not.

R I liked what you said about the private and the public being fused together. Does that mean that there's a level of exhibitionism in your work?

D It's funny how the final frontier with any artist is the autobiographical. When you ask me about exhibitionism the real question is about who I am. Because if I am someone different from what you see on stage or at the museum, people are prone to feel cheated. I understand this. I've felt it, too. When you see someone like Grace Jones it makes you wonder if her private life is all Cubist bikini and exaggerated gestures. And that's where we miss the point. For all we know she might feel more connected to her inner core when she's performing than when she's not. I've performed naked before and the best thing about it is that it feels like a costume. Genuine leather. (Giggles.)

R to your lyrics I do develop a sense of knowing who you are. We can't escape the autobiographical.

D No, we can't but we don't have to emphasize it either. Here's the thing. I'll ask you to tell me three things you've learned about me from my lyrics. I'm talking obituary worthy stuff—autobiographical through and through.

R Hahahaha. Look how the tables have turned. Honestly, I couldn't say anything like that. It's more like a loose idea. But it's solid enough that I think it represents the real you.

D Good! That means I must be doing something right.

R Do you set out to reveal yourself? What's your process? Do you start with the melody first or the lyrics?

D I write free verse but I also play around with melodies so it's hard to say which one takes priority. Also, I can't control when and how the muses hit me. That's as much of a mystery to me as it is to the next guy.

R Talking about mystery, you know, the one thing about you that's shocked me the most was hearing your voice over the phone. Have you gotten that before? Kind of like a disembodied impostor.

D It's funny you should say that. I've thought about it before. I've even played with muffled phone effects on my recordings. It's, like, how far can I get from my voice and still be me? But, yeah, people have told me that I sound very different on the phone. The disembodied impostor is a first, though.

R It's really more like a different person. I guess for you it's easier to retain a sense of self even when you hear your voice through these effects, because the original sound came from within you. For me it's a radical break—if it doesn't sound like you it just isn't you. I guess this has to do with anticipation generally. Your music is full of surpris-

es, too. The listener rarely gets exactly what they expected. Isn't that what the definition of "serious music" is?

D Hahaha. I've always wondered what serious music is. I love pop music and I know that most of it is generally more accessible. And then there's difficult music. But I don't know if anyone is any less serious for writing a pop song. Britney Spears' "Toxic" is cheap and accessible but it's also musically very accomplished. You can't argue even against the parts that annoy the shit out of you.

R Wow! I love that song! You're right, though. It's not perfect but I wouldn't change anything about it. I remember seeing an Off-Off Broadway theatre production back in New York, in which a slowed down gospel version of it was performed by this very talented trio of women. It made me respect the original even better. Not because I didn't like the interpretation but precisely because I realized that the song must have good bones to lend itself to that kind of version. Am I making sense?

D (Laughs heartily.) Good bones and Britney Spears...

R You know what I mean.

D Yes, I do, I do. Good songs make good covers. And it terms of surprises, I think that the same simple melody can carry many possible twists and turns. Have you heard Sonic Youth's version of "Get Into The Groove"?

R Yes! I used to have the CD before I even owned a CD player.

D You know how their version flattens the song—it's like they take the bounce out of Madonna. To me that's magical.

R Yeah, zero bounce. Never thought about it like that. Poor Madonna...

D Don't worry about her. She signed up for it.

R Well, that's true of you, too. Anyone out there can pick up and bust out a cover of a Dorian Wood song.

D Lord, have mercy!

R Hahahaha! But I'm still not sure if your lyrics will sound authentic in somebody else's voice. They're branded in my mind as your message to the world. Also to me. It's kind of intimate. Do you think this has something to do with the fact that I know you personally? Maybe if I knew Madonna I'd be suspicious of anyone who claimed they felt "like a virgin..."

D (Yells) I feel like a virgin! And then some. Hahaha!

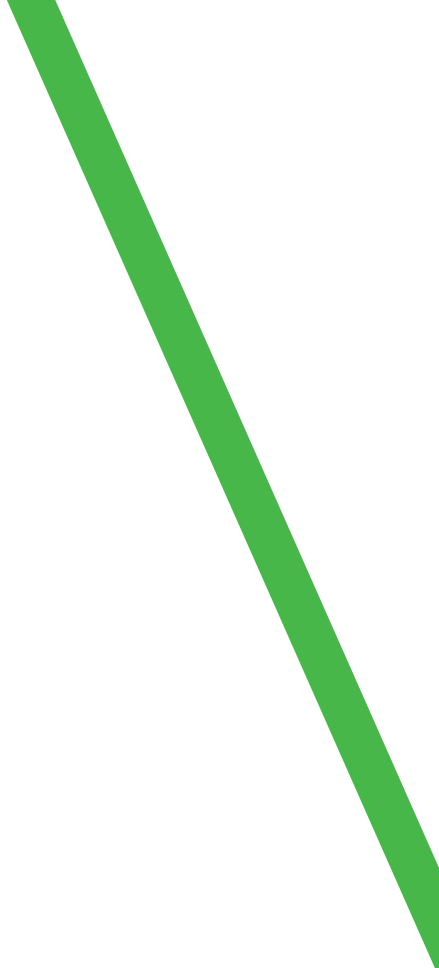
RV: Don't we all?

D Speak for yourself.

RV: Hahaha! I'm not writing this down.

D Please, don't. I like to keep a veneer of chastity...

R Ha! I don't think you care how you're perceived, though. And, frankly, it shouldn't matter to you. I like it how you can get radically political, too. I'm thinking "A Gospel of Elephants/Hpssos" or "The Mutual" from your earlier stuff—divisive and ever so slightly wicked.



D Here we go again. Someone I know was recently talking about my devious charms, whatever that's supposed to mean. But, yeah, why not be political? There are so many things in this world that rub me the wrong way. Banking, homophobia, professional athletics, misogyny, taxes, war, those ugly sheepskin shoes that make a girl's feet look like an old camel's, and the list goes on. I talk about these things in my songs but I mostly do it metaphorically. If I spoke literally, it would feel like I was giving an interview. Hahaha!

R Are you saying that you've given me the straight truth?

D Not straight but definitely the truth. Right from the deepest recesses of my soul.

R You have a soul?!?

D Yeah, her name is Angelyne and she drives a pink Corvette.

BRIAN GETNICK IN CONVERSATION WITH WEBB GARRETSON AND MARK WHEATON. PUNK AND PERFORMANCE IN THE 70'S AND 80'S LOS ANGELES.

BRIAN GETNICK So you guys came here in the 1980's?

WEBB GARRETSON 70's.

B 1970's okay

W I came here from New York in 1979 with a cabaret act called Bruce and Lois. We came out of this sensibility where pop music was being used in avant-garde theatre. In New York, I was going out for regular run the mill sorts of things as an actress and doing music. Then I decided I really wanted to pursue music because it was just at the beginning of the whole punk rock thing. My partner Richard wanted to go to LA for a month and we thought we were just going to go for a vacation. I never left.

B Really? That was the trip, you stayed.

W I stayed. In New York I had no sense that there was anything worthwhile in Los Angeles. It was a land of gauche people and blondes. No gravitas. It was really considered empty but what I found was that it was full of very smart people who came to make their way somehow in film or music or in performance. It was a super vital scene and much more accessible than New York, maybe because it wasn't rows of skyscrapers. I was very intimidated

by Manhattan even though I grew up on the east coast. Here, I felt like I had access.

As a woman, you could go out every night of the week; go to a club, be alone, meet your friends and it was totally cool. You didn't have to go out on a date, you didn't have to go out with somebody and there was something happening in the punk rock and performance scene every night. The other thing that was cool was that the performance art world was always being done in the clubs. You would see a band and then a performance artist would get up. There was real diversity at these venues. Now you can talk for a little while.

B Nice segue to Mark.

MARK WHEATON I didn't come from the art or performance art world at all. I was a musician in a Rock and Roll band in Seattle from 77 up into the 80s. It was a very competitive and catty scene up there. There weren't that many bands but they were constantly competing on a street level. You would put a flyer on a telephone poll to promote your gig and then the next person would come along and rip it down. You'd do a gig and somebody would pull the plug on the power and it was usually a member of the other band. Or somebody would get up on

the stage and dump garbage on the head of your lead singer. They don't talk about this nowadays but that is the way it was in Seattle in the 70's because everybody was insecure and afraid that they weren't going to be the one that became famous. My band had a real desire to leave that scene behind and go somewhere else.

We were making our own little 45 rpm singles that we would produce ourselves and send them out into the ether which in those days was all fanzine based. You would send your record to a fanzine somewhere and hope that they would review it and usually they didn't. For some reason when we sent out our 45's, people in San Francisco, LA and New York wrote reviews of our singles.

B What was the band?

M It was called Chinas Comidas. Anyway when we started getting reviews, we decided to go to San Francisco and played at the Mabuhay and met Zev who was opening for bands then. We didn't even think of him as a performance artist, he was another musician but he was doing this weird thing. Then we went to New York and New York was a much more difficult scene to get a foot in because the New York scene was very insular.

B The CBGB's era.

M This was CBGB's era but we couldn't get a gig at CBGB's. We had a connection to get a gig at this club called club Hurrah that was run by Jim Fouratt. It was kind of a good club. I went to New York and Jim kind of sat me down and told me why we weren't going to get a gig. They felt like Cynthia, our lead singer, was a Patti Smith imi-

tation and so there was no place for a Patti Smith imitation in a New York club.

But we had already arranged to go, we were shipping our equipment by train, and we got plane tickets. When we arrived in New York, Cynthia convinced Jim that it was worth his time to put us on the bill. It wasn't a good bill or anything but we played there. While we were playing there we got a telegram from Los Angeles from Slash Magazine saying that they wanted to sign us and that they wanted to see us in LA. We thought wow.

We finally managed to get a gig on Halloween night of 79 at the Hong Kong opening for the Germs which was kind of a performance art act in reality. The night that we arrived there, we were a few days ahead of the gig and we looked in the paper and Johanna Went was playing at the Hong Kong so we went to see her and that is how I met Johanna.

W I saw you perform with Johanna before I even met you.

M The next night, Johanna came to see us when we played at the Hong Kong and liked our band. We stuck around LA through the early part of 1980s and at some point, Cynthia the lead singer just got tired of the whole thing. Slash magazine had told us no, we are not going to sign you after all so she got disappointed and she quit the band and went back to New York to become a poet again. The band broke up and Johanna, she says, you and your brother should join my band. That was how it actually started and I knew nothing about performance art or what it was.

B Was what you and Johanna were doing considered performance art back then?

W Johanna came out of the world of street theater. She had toured with Tom Murrin.

M She would get a bunch of stuff that she found in the street, she didn't even have a car, get on a bus, take props to somebody's storefront and do a whacky performance. Eventually, because she was going to these rock clubs, she started talking bands into letting her open for them. Then she became a fixture on that whole scene up through the 80s. We played everywhere; the Whiskey, the Lingerie, the Roxy, you name it, we played all the clubs. We went to New York and San Francisco.

B What was the relationship between theater practices and performance art in LA at that time?

W When I became the performance coordinator at LACE there was a real anti-theatrical sensibility there but I got the job because I had been working as a line producer and I understood what lights were and sound was and the mechanics of theater. When I got the job I was like oh you want to do a show, well you need this blah, blah, blah because I wasn't a performance artist. I came from Theater. I wasn't like someone who went to art school. To me a performance artist was someone who went to art school and said instead of putting a picture on the wall, instead of creating a static work, I'm going to make a non static work. That was the name of the committee at LACE for performance:

“Non Static”. That is the way I understood it too; a performance artist is a person who is a visual artist who is all of a sudden performing, not somebody who is like a hip comedian like Sandra Bernhard. When I was at LACE there was a bastion of people who didn't like the polish that I was bringing to the presentation of other people's work because I had learned all this polish for New York, all these theatricals ...

B You mean production?

W Production, yeah.

MW: There were people who were adamantly anti theatre and felt like that was what Hollywood already had to offer, that performance was supposed to be anti theater, anti entertainment. But I think that in performance there was a lot of crossover from all sorts of genres like from the dance and music world.

W The cool stuff was when those boundaries weren't so clear. The thing about LACE is that when we had a performance committee we had to go through all these proposals and one of the criteria was can this be presented someplace else? Would this be better in a rock club, would this be better in a proscenium theater or an equity waiver theater or does this really have no better home than here? They would really think about what venues, what context and then they will try to balance out the male, female, black, white.

M This is also in the days before things like the UCLA performance program or Red Cat anything where they presented works that were kind of on a higher level production wise. LACE really was at the grassroots level, the

place where edgy performance, even the highly produced stuff would end up. If you can believe it, In those days we could go to KCRW and be on the air promoting shows at LACE all the time week after week ...

W And the LA Times ...

M The LA Times was reviewing performance all the time. Even Johanna Went got reviewed dozens of times.

W The other thing is that this was pre-Jesse Helms, so there was money for the arts. There was money specifically for experimental performance work and there was money that went to individual arts. None of that exist anymore.

B How does the money get filtered to these artists?

W Well, my budget at LACE was 150,000 dollars just for performance.

M Also people could apply individually through the NEA for grants.

W That is all gone. The other thing that existed then that doesn't exist now is that all of these organizations like LACE, and The Kitchen in New York, and Diverse Works in Texas; all alternative art spaces had mission statement and they all were connected to each other. They had a yearly conference and they had ground rules about how they were organized and you could go from one space to the next. You had all these venues all over the country where you could present your work.

M It was a circuit.

W It was a circuit yes and this was the model on which LACE was founded.

Then there were curatorial committees that were made up of artists and everybody who was presented had to get an honorarium. It was not a commercial gallery situation, it was never viewed as such, but it was a pretty great thing.

M This is the downtown LACE down on Industrial street which had an upstairs performance space which was as big as the current place basically. Then they had a downstairs exhibition space for sculpture and painting and that kind of stuff. They had a bookstore and-

W -and a screening room. You have never seen it?

B No.

W Oh it was spectacular.

MW: Yeah, it was an amazing space.

B Yeah, it sounds like a museum

WG: It was a museum.

W Yeah, with resources.

B Your lives have changed and Los Angeles has changed since then. How does it feel to look back from here?

M It's hard to say, I mean ...

B I also imagine that there are a lot of people that are just absent now, they are gone.

M Yeah, there's that and there is also the fact that it got a lot more expensive to do productions. The spaces that presented people became more structured in how they would book things and even clubs became less open to variety. I mean you could play at a mainstream rock club and be a per-

formance artist. We played at the Whiskey all the time and they loved it. Audiences also expected to see a variety of things when they went to a show. Now there's no way unless you went in there and paid money to present yourself.

W I think people were really open minded.

M Yeah, it was a very wide open scene. I mean Grandmaster Flash would play at the Lingerie, the same crowd would come to see him as they came to see REM and to see Johanna Went.

W When you are in your 20s you are more inclined to go out because of all these factors of wanting to meet people and hookup. I think you become less that way when you are older and so I would hope that people who are now 23 and living in Los Angeles have a sense a vibrant culture that is probably vastly different than the culture that we had 25 years ago.

M That we wouldn't even be aware of really.

W Yeah, so I think part of it is an age factor but I also think that the money was a really great, the money that was available ...

M Well, there is a lot more money now but the access to it is different.

B What changed for you in your 30's? To be frank, I'm curious about how the AIDS epidemic affected the performance scenes you were a part of.

W I was 23 when I got here. When I was in my '30s I was also part of WAC, the Women's Action Coalition which was also affiliated with Act Up. We were

dealing with AIDS stuff. That's when I started working with Ralph Gorodetsky who is my current collaborative partner. Then also working with other bands and doing spoken word pieces and they were more serious, but I had to leave the whole performance art world and get more into just the music world and become serious. The Weba Show was pre-AIDS. Jerry who was in the Weba Show was my first friend who contracted AIDS and died of it. He died in 83, before there was anything that could help you survive it. That whole world was impacted by AIDS because people weren't going out anymore.

B I guess one aspect of the AIDS crisis and its effects on how one defines performance art in LA is the fact that so much of what the gay community brought to the table was rooted in theater and when that community was decimated, I think of it as a historical hole in a general understanding of what performance art encompassed. Also, for you Mark, it really seems like you and Johanna and these punk bands you mentioned were bringing so much theatricality to the punk scene and it was somehow accepted that time. It seems like a really unique period. Where theater skills were like-

M At least in LA my experience in San Francisco and not necessarily so much New York punk rock came out of art school. The punk rock scene in LA, people in their mid-20s who were going to CalArts and going to Otis wanted to incorporate a visual sensibility to what they were doing. They weren't necessarily professional musicians. You saw a lot of people, artists, get up on stage and do performance art things

backed by rock bands. For instance The Deadbeats; their drummer was a 14 year old kid with hair down to his waist. He played prog rock style drums, really elaborate drums, and yet they were like kill the hippies and all that stuff. The Weirdos were, I guess the New York-est punk band in the sense they had ripped t-shirts and safety pins. The Screamers were a band without guitars and sometimes even without drums and they all played kind of like Kraftwerk. Their lead singer had spiky hair that went way up and he jumped around on the stage pogoing. The performance element of it and the presentation was equally as important as the music and that's why it blended so well with the theatrical and dance performances. Because it was all part of the same kind of interest. All these people coming out of art schools and saying let's not just do it as art. Let's be a band and do it.

B Well that's part of my interest in talking to you two. I think the stratification between disciplines is hard to break free of and it's good to know that there are precedents for mixing it up.

W They should do a Pacific Standard Time about performance in LA.

B I agree.

M So far it hasn't happened.

W Well the problem with performance is it's ephemeral. In the '80s it wasn't as easy to document stuff as it is now. The VHS camera was not great in low light so there's just not that much stuff left behind.

M There is stuff. It's just not the same kind of documentation as there was for other things like dance.

B This interview is part of that stuff.

M Also the performance that was interesting was happening outside the gallery and the museum world. It wasn't for the academics and the curators and all those people.

W They were missing it.

M They were missing it, and they still don't even know it exists.

Native Strategies would like to thank:

LACE: Shoghig Halajian, Sarah Russin,
Melissa Castellano, Angel Alvarado, Noor Asif



Department of Cultural Affairs



Thank you Robert Crouch for
your continued support

Echo Park Film Center
Side Street Projects

NS5/summer, 2016

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Curated by: Brian Getnick, Tanya Rubbak,
Jules Gimbrone

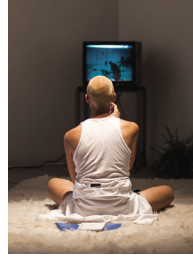
Edited by: Brian Getnick and Angel Alvarado

Design: Tanya Rubbak

Printing: Typecraft, Pasadena CA

Photography: Jeremy Oversier





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