In conversation between Antonia Barnett McIntosh, Ethan Braun, and Samuel Holloway
A Deep dive lecture transcript
7 May 2025

Antonia Barnett McIntosh:
Kia ora koutou, thank you for coming. Thank you, Ruth, for the introductions. We thought we would start with little bits about ourselves and how we came here, and then we'll dive into some conversation. So, kia ora, I'm Antonia, composer-performer, and the way in which Samuel and I came to be here is through our online journal BLOT, which commissions writing and creative responses around music, sound, and performance in Aotearoa. We've published four issues so far, plus this special issue that's come out just for this. So, thanks again for coming, and I'll hand over to Samuel.

Samuel Holloway:
Kia ora, ko Samuel Holloway tōku ingoa. Thank you, Ruth, for the introduction. As Antonia says, well, I'm here with a few hats on but, one of those is part of BLOT, a journal for sound, music, and performance. And it's a real pleasure to be here to have this conversation with Ethan who I'll now hand the microphone to.

Ethan Braun:
Hi, I'm Ethan. Welcome. Thanks everybody for coming. Shall I say something about what, at this point?

Antonia:
If you could talk about yourself and how you came to be here.

Ethan:
Well, hi. My name's Ethan, I'm from Tongva/Gabrieleño land in what's

now called Los Angeles, and I am of diasporic Ashkenazi descent—that is East European Jews who ended up in Hollywood, you know, like not in the industry, just in the neighbourhood. And really I was only in North Hollywood. You could say I grew up amidst the desert shrubs, a small mountain range from the Pacific Ocean.

Since 2020, I've been living in Berlin, making it my base. I've been working across genre disciplines as well—collaborating in visual arts, exhibition spaces, in film, ballet, and theatre, in addition to concert music. I write music frequently for certain ensembles and with certain people, developing longer term collaborations. Solistenensemble Kaleidoskop is the name of a great one in Berlin with whom I have a close affiliation.

I came to be here today through [motorcycle goes past], her name was just covered by a motorcycle: Ruth Buchanan, who is a dear friend and a wonderful collaborator of Lina's—Lina can't be here tonight due to taking on the parenting work, to allow me to be in this space. Ruth, Lina, and I at some point were having a laugh I think, Ruth, at your show in Möchengladback perhaps? That's somehow where I trace this work to. Somehow we were just having a vibe, the three of us, about doing a show together. Neither Lina nor I commonly present, or actually have ever presented, a show in an exhibition space like this that is really our own principal undertaking, I would say. So that's how we came here. I mean, Ruth took up a position here a few years ago and now here we are a couple of years later.

Coming to Aotearoa for me is a very, rather radical experience. I lack the words for it, but anyway, happily that's not the subject of this particular conversation, but I'm very eager to continue it. What do you think?

Antonia:
Kia ora, thank you. Next we thought it might be helpful if you speak a bit about what happened since Ruth asked you to make the show. So a bit about how the show came together, how it sits in this space, a little summary of what you think is important about it.

Ethan:
Sure, sure. Well, initially, Lina and I had thought to make a kind of copy shop or something where we would make zines with people. We wanted to bring something, we just had this idea we wanted to bring something to a space that was open, that was porous in a certain way. We weren't really sure what shapes that would take. And then at some point, the two of us were going, why don't we just do what we do? Which was, I'll make some music and Lina will make some visuals. And something that left over from the copy shop idea was this idea of an archive, or a library, or a making public of a certain frame of a lecture or intellectual work. And that

was the idea for the bookmaking process.

Well, I have this tendency to make too much material. And it's really great because then if something doesn't work in one place, it can go in somewhere else. And sometimes it takes years for these things to find their place. In this particular case, we found a certain collection of pieces, some of which I was making as a form of creative correspondence with people [with artist Justine Melford Colegate, cellist Ashley Walters] and some of which I was making in response to specific historical works [with National Theater Mannheim and Roulette Intermedium NYC]. Like, pieces that were in dialogue with something or someone. I collected some, sent them to Lina, and asked, oh what do you think of these? She was like, oh that's great.

And then she found some visuals that related to and spoke with the pieces, even using some of the notated materials of mine, for in fact the piece in the back [located in the Reading Room in the gallery], which is called *Cloud Study*. And the process really started from there. We realised, why not, why doesn't Lina make the score? Usually the score is deemed to be the providence of the composer. As with most such conventions we wanted to unpack some of these aspects of the practice. So she made the scores, notations, and propositions for how sonic notation might take place, visually. And they would be in response to and in conversation with these pieces, which are dictated by mood, affect, and particular ways in which they were recorded. Maybe I would stop there, take a question. I would love a question.

Samuel:
So, in terms of how you group things, I think obviously we've got objects in the space, like this clamshell, which maybe you can address at some moment, the piano, we've got the scores on the wall in all their different forms, we have sound that occurs in the space, you also undertake what you call maintenance in the space. Could you talk about how those things are grouped together? Maybe that's to do with the organisation or logic of how you put them together, and perhaps why, how they're meant to operate in concert.

Ethan:
Well something that came up for Lina and myself has been the song cycle, or Liederkreis, or certain songbooks [like the American Songbook or Jazz Realbook]. Arthur Doyle, who was a songwriter from the United States, has a record called *The Songwriter*, which was somehow close for us. The song cycle starts with one piece and it could cycle through or come back around in a circle; the American Songbook and Jazz Realbook are ever-growing collections of hits. These structures inspired us for grouping; each of Lina's scores has a corresponding book, or smaller

collections of pieces.

And something I wanted to do for years, which I had proposed in 2021 when I'd been invited to an exhibition that didn't end up working out, was make a calendar for all of the performances, for all the times that you hear a sound in the space. I had no idea how to make that. And thankfully, through Ruth, a wonderful person named Simon Lear emerged in my awareness and, through the facilitation of Artspace Aotearoa, came to work with us. I told him a bit about the idea and he said, well I think I can make something that would make that work.

We developed a kind of calendar, which you see as you walk into the room [framed image at the front of the gallery]. That calendar has all the time codes throughout the day of the different pieces that are playing. It was somehow important—that the sound moves as clouds do throughout the room. So the sound, like the weather, is just changing throughout the day. Sometimes there are different crossings of different pieces, sometimes there's a lot of crossings of different pieces, ranging from broad soundings across the room to sounds that are more localised.

The projection pieces are here [points to the various scores as each is addressed]. The mirror pieces are next to the mirror. And those speakers, the black speakers, if you really want to crane your head far up, are for the floor piece. And the piece in the back, in the Reading Room has its own speakers. There's a single speaker here for the book scores. And these two speakers for the wall. The sound travels across these speakers basically at all times through Artspace Aotearoa's opening times.

There are little silences, which we learnt when we were installing the show were necessary, and the silences give a kind of breath. And sometimes you have very intense pieces, like those located at the projection, that have a very intense affect, after which takes place a drop, or an energetic sense of dropping. These little aspects of the compositional and affective experience of music that happen in ways that I can't control, like when I'm playing them in front of you, right? Setting it all up in this calendar made it possible for the sound to go in different ways at all times.

The way the visual is working is, we wanted to produce and offer varying forms of notation. The mirror pieces all come from a correspondence that I have with a friend named Justine, and the two of us were making things for one another as an exchange, and so all of these on the mirror are about that. And it's next to the piano—there's a lot of piano music that's going on in the mirror. The piano is in fact the piano of Hermione Johnson, who is with us tonight. And so there's that kind of dialogue that's happening there.

I'm not going to talk about the clamshell just yet. We'll get there.

You know, each of these set-ups deal with certain kinds of dialogue. *Cloud Study* is the only one with a standard notation, the Western European musical notation.

This one back here [gestures behind to the wall] is a bit more of a comic strip, you know, it's a kind of funny faux-music. I can read this. I can read each of these scores, which comes maybe to the maintenance. Am I moving too fast here? Is this ok for everybody? [Waits.] Ok, great.

The maintenance, which Samuel referred to, is a word that I've been using to refer to the sound-making by live people in the space because obviously a lot of work is being done digitally by a computer on a computer's clock. It doesn't really need people to operate at this point, short of, you know, just uploading things into the cloud. With maintenance, I wanted to maintain a sense of liveness in the room, and the sense of live presence for and with the sound.

I like the word "maintenance" because it seems to involve care, it seems to involve mechanics. The word is, it brings to my ear the French—you know "main" is your hand and "tenir" is to pull—so in it there's a sense of grasping, a sense of getting your hands into it. I also like this idea of the lay of hands, offering the hand in care.

In fact, you see there's a lot of hands, [points to a large image of a hand on the wall]. It's a rather handsy little show. There are also these two books over there simply comprising images of hands, tracing a certain affective flow through them. The hand is, in a certain way, an originary point of Western European notation. For Guido d'Arezzo, the hand provided a format for reading music which you can learn about, by which one uses the hand to externalise sounds. So, do-re-mi-fa-sol [singing solfege], you can go around your hand, but then you can learn, oh that, this place there, that place there, this one's there, this one's there, this one's there. So it's both text that you can read that's as well just your body, being in your body. You're sounding with this, [your hand] you're in dialogue with this to actually create the notation that someone else can read.

So, it [the Guidonian hand] is often presented in this very robust image, one with which we played: here [gesturing to wall], the lace hands offer another form of manual, or hand-based notation. That's called Curwen Hand Signs, originating in the 18th century and it corresponds to solfege. [Singing] fa-mi-re-si, fa-mi-re-si. Pardon me, I'm running out of breath. Not maintaining anymore. But that's another form of notation. And in fact, what's written here, for those who can't, who don't read this kind of notation, that's just fa-mi-re-si, fa-mi-re-si. I mean, the grace notes,

nobody's going to go [demonstrates singing what the added grace notes would sound like]. But anyway, so you know, there's these different ways in which the hand is present.

There's also clipping [points to hair clip notation on wall]. We just, I don't remember, the hair clip is, where the hair clip came into that. I would leave Lina to that.

But, you know, so all of these images, and you can see, I can't demonstrate it as well with the floor score, but the floor score offers a very different kind of a notation. It uses chord symbols familiar from jazz notation, a bit of text notation, tempo and expressive markings. With mirror, I write different phrases, harmonies, and gestures on in the different maintenances, and I write them in kind of different ways.

Some of the other performers with whom I work, they have different ways of reading what I present there, always with the idea that we are supporting what is present. Sorry, that was a very long-winded way of getting there. The maintenance, for me, is really about supporting the sonic presence in this room at any given time. And at any given time, it's going to be rather different, so it's going to change how someone who's doing maintenance is actually playing with it.

I had a really great rehearsal yesterday with three music students and with a couple of instructions, and a couple of little sonic meditations by Pauline Oliveros, we got into a way of playing with what is present that was very much supportive of our show's sounding. And so that's, I guess, where the maintenance lands.

Antonia:
Kia ora, thank you. Lina did mention to me that the clip was there to refer to the clipping sound that a hair clip like that makes.

Ethan:
I'm so glad she inputted on that. But yes, there's–

Antonia:
So something to do with that or around that, yes.

Ethan:
But you don't, you know the sound of clipping. Or if you're old enough, you know the sound of the CD skipping or something—it's, that's a moment where the sound gets too much from the speakers. In this piece, there's clipping every two seconds. So this [points to the image of the hair clip on the wall score] lets you know that we are aware. Don't worry, it's okay—you put on a hair clip [demonstrates], look cute, and then read the

score, you know? That's how I read it anyway.

Antonia:
I guess that speaks a little bit to glitch as well, in a way, and you've also spoken, I guess how you're speaking about scores, sound, maintenance, and these aspects coming together. We've talked a bit about counterpoint and polyphony, kind of practically and conceptually. I wonder if you could speak a little bit to that.

Ethan:
Yeah, I mean the word polyphony is, I'm getting very linguistic sorry everybody.

Antonia:
That's the big question: "is language large enough?"

Ethan:
See? There we go. The word polyphony, poly, a phone, a lot of phones, a lot of voices, many voices. I think the experience of making a show is polyphonic. I would name Jing and Bridget and Robbie and Felixe, and all the different people who've been coming and supporting making the show. They're all present and very, very physically present in putting the show together.

The conversation with Lina, in terms of how the visual comes to notate music, and is it accurate enough? Because it may seem rather open, but there's a logic to everything. There's a relation to every visual, to every sound in different ways. So that's also a kind of balance. I'm thinking polyphony in the expanded sense here, where I think the dialogue, the conversation, I like a kind of, I like loud, I'm from a big family. I'm kind of thinking that there is glitch that's present in that, you know? Conversation takes a turn at a certain point. Somebody gets really, even, somebody gets really insecure, and somebody is pushing for something, somebody's got an agenda, somebody's in a really good mood. You know, all these things can produce a certain, they leave a certain mark, if you will, whatever that conversation is. It's not transposed into musical terminology.

Polyphony is something, I was just nerding out a little bit with Antonia and Samuel before, so you can just say if this is too much, but polyphony for me comes to the practice of this thing called part-writing in which, for example, you write for four parts, and you should make them all sound nice. Each part is its own voice and should each feel independent. As Samuel said, they should all have their moments. But that's complicated to give that, do you see? This is a very, very basic aspect of the kind of practice that Antonia, Samuel, and I share, I think, which is a

practice rooted in Neue Musik and Experimental Music, tracing back to Schoenberg, tracing back to Maryanne Amacher. All from these different directions, all of these composers learned how to do part-writing. They learned how to work with different voices and how to get them moving in a way that feels musical, whatever that might mean. And that could be grounded with aesthetics and ideologies and certain commitments and can produce schools of making, et cetera, et cetera.

But the polyphony is something I really come back to. For a few years I was writing chorales, a term that for me comes from Bach's chorales. There's 355 of them.

Samuel:
56.

Ethan:
356! I don't know exactly what y'all's musical formation was, but I mean for me, chorale writing was a very basic exercise. The teacher would play them, you would have to transcribe every voice, learn how the voices were, analyse how their relationships were. A kind of relational aesthetics, in fact. So you're talking about the relation between these voices and the relation of the voice to itself. And I think that that practice is very central, for me, to what composing is.

So coming back to the glitch, the glitch can alter the logic that I think I'm producing. You know, so if I'm carrying my counterpoint a certain way, and I'm controlling all the voices, this measure of control, the question of domination, the glitch is an annoyance to that. The glitch pushes against that. It questions that. It breaks this false kind of control. There was a word about the famous composer, Josquin [des Prez]. It's one of these quotes. I don't know if it's really true. It's something like… [Sounds play in the space.] It is now 6.30 everyone. Those were flies. Um… what was said about Josquin was that he pushed the notes. Really it was like this [demonstrates hand gesture, pushing outwards], he pushed the notes with his hand. But I think this element is exactly what I wanted to kind of undo, or find what happens when it's being undone, I guess. Does that answer your question?

Antonia:
Yes.

Ethan:
Great.

Samuel:
Perhaps I can pivot from there, keeping the idea of polyphony in mind I

was just thinking about my experience of the work in the space. And ah, I mean I wonder if you can kind of overdo polyphony, right? And if you have too many voices, it kind of becomes one and disappears. I don't think that happens here, but there is moments kind of, of sort of overwhelm when you have lots, lots coming together. I'm wondering what you expect or want people to experience when they come into the space. You have a calendar, and when I was listening during the maintenance before, I found myself going to the calendar to see what was coming up next, so that I could understand each individual work as it pertained to what was happening sound-wise, but also in terms of the scores. I suspect that's probably not a common experience of visitors to the space, I don't know. Do you have any kind of expectations of how people will navigate all these things coming together?

Ethan:
Well, to keep it short and sweet: no.

I think we were speaking about this a little bit before, and I think it's, I mean, again, coming back to this question of formation, since that's important for the question of polyphony, it feels to me that there is an ideal listener that is produced within the context of that formation: a listener who is going to go to the calendar and be like, "hmm, well…" You know, a listener who is gonna check on these things. And of course, that's a wonderful way of listening. It's a very technical mode of listening.

In English, we're rather impoverished with words for listening. It's listening and hearing, maybe comprehension… I don't know, there's not so much. Maybe in other languages… I mean, in French, when I speak about this, there are like seven terms for different kinds of listening. Pauline Oliveros coined a practice she called "deep listening," which was an ongoing one for her and through which she went about proposing different modes of and means for listening. For me, I want a sensual listening. I would like for people to feel, be able to feel present, present their worries and their concerns and, "oh, that's so boring, there's so many voices here now." I don't know, "it's fine", or "get me out of here." Or people lingering. That's all welcome.

Samuel:
Perhaps, in defence of my mode of listening… No, no, no, I'm being sarcastic really. I guess one reason I find it interesting for me is it allows me to draw a relation between the scored elements and what happens in the space and the sonic material, which, of course, is not necessary, but that seems to me to be something that can be very interesting to understand what we're hearing. All this material? That's all I offer as my defence.

Ethan:
Well no, I mean I think, again, there's reasons for the visuals that are present. In the projection, we only offer subtitles for what's going on. So there's a violin, so it'll say, "violin." It's doing pizzicato, so it says "pizzicato." Then there's a couple of little funny things in there that make it a little bit more loose and metaphorical. But most of it is in fact very concrete.

When I write on the mirror, I perform in a concrete way. So being able to read that connection is a wonderful thing, and I suppose can give one a lot. I don't know, that discerning that [the calendar], and discerning it accurately, and being like, "Oh, Ethan is performing this thing, which it says over there, at this time, everything's kosher..." That's great, but that, *not* knowing that might get you elsewhere with the maintenance. And I guess I'm very, I'm just very open to that possibility. And I don't, do you wish to manipulate sound in the room [to Samuel], but not so much how one listens, necessarily?

Samuel:
Just to close off that thought, and then it's all yours Antonia. I guess I've always, when music is presented in this kind of way, musical notation in particular, I've always thought it kind of reads like this kind of secret language that if you studied music, you kind of have this access to, and if you don't, it's like, it's mysterious and kind of interesting in a very, in a very different way. So yes, I don't suppose that I have special access via that. I've got particular kind of access.

Ethan:
Yeah.

Antonia:
And also interest, I guess, yeah.

Samuel:
Indeed.

Antonia:
Ethan, I really like hearing you talk about listening like that, and the language around listening. And yeah, you've mentioned sensual listening, and you talked about seduction a little bit earlier in our chat. And from Samuel's question, you talked about listenership, which kind of brings us, in a way, to these concepts of reciprocity and mutuality, which appear in all of the texts that you can read around the exhibition.

And so from out of that, I wonder if you could talk a bit about collaboration, because there are a lot of people also who've been

involved, as well as Lina, in this putting-together of the show. And you mentioned a little bit before that in musical spaces, we don't talk about collaboration so much. I wonder if you could speak to how you think about collaboration, or, and not in ideals of what your ideal collaboration is, but you know, you're saying it's about mood. Who comes? Are people depressed? Are they in a good mood? Are they… you know, that kind of adds to the glitch, but it also adds to the mode of collaborative listening. So, yeah, I wonder if you could speak to that.

Ethan:
Sure. Well, collaboration is really just a, I almost find the word unnecessary. It's just so basic to what I do and how I'm working, whether I'm working with musicians or a sculptural artist or an artist working in any medium, whatever it may be, it's always a question of finding what works. And what works is not about me. You know, it's not the question of it being about the composer, about the composer's voice. I mean, these are things that maybe other people in other disciplines don't have these kinds of issues the same way. It articulates itself differently. And then for composers, it's always this thing of having "your voice".

Antonia:
Yes, and there's a lot around authorship and that kind of thing, and I'm interested in collaboration as a way of, like, giving up my authorship and sharing it with someone else, and so that's also why I'm interested.

Ethan:
Right, right. Yeah. I mean, it goes back a long way. It should be mentioned that Bach had about 20 children, most of whom were very literate in music and were doing most of the copy work, if not all. You know, I mean, there are endless artistic practitioners going all the way back in European practices, for sure, and elsewhere that involved a large degree of people. But, you know, somebody gets the name. I mean, that's a constant thing. I mean, I dare say, my ego gets a little bit, it gives a little bit of side eye sometimes when my name is under something. In Europe, the director's name always goes first. In America, the composer's always goes first. These dynamics are always playing out, but that's also part of collaboration, those tendencies. And I think that collaboration produces more interesting work. It can move outside of established discourses in a particular way and moves into the risky place of being willing to be open to what someone else thinks, wants, or needs, particularly what they need. I think the phrase came up at some point, "boundaries save lives," in our building-up of the show, as a way of describing your needs.

I mean, definitely what you're saying [to Samuel], if you don't mind me sharing this, you were saying you know, "I like my own time in the studio," and I think that I also need that. And I assure you, I spend a great many

hours completely alone. At some point though, I just get into these spirals and I really need other people around to come out of them. Not a question of validation so much, or maybe it is, but the question of being seen, and being seen by someone else. We're actually doing something together. This is not simply a product of my spirals in my studio, a little stoned, but they're actually something that's in conversation with someone else, and someone else can read the work in a very different way.

So with Lina, who has, I mean, we've worked together and lived together, and parented together, loved together, you know, things together for several years, we have a certain rapport, a certain conversation going. And with my other collaborators, I could name several: Adam Linder, Isabel Lewis, Ariel Ashbel, Loretta Fahrenholz, Justin Kennedy, Shahryar Nashat, Ensemble Klang… all these artists are artists with whom I've worked a lot. I've learnt so much by opening myself out to what their practice is. A similar feeling of opening came about by coming here to Aotearoa. I don't know this place, I don't know the discourse here. And, like, in this collaboration with Ruth comes an opportunity to be, to just to be humbled by the fact that there's more than me. I think that that's a really essential part of collaboration, and I think that it's essential to the feeling, for me, that I get from collaboration, I guess, let's say.

Samuel:
Okay, we've got a few more questions. Is that–

Ethan:
Is everybody okay? [Affirmative.] Great.

Samuel:
I have two questions, one which is, I'll go, I guess I've got to choose one.

Ethan:
You can do both.

Samuel:
Let's start with time. And I'm just thinking about the title of the show: *Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes)*. There's lots of kind of flashing time signals there. It's both endless space, a small window, and then, very specifically, 10 minutes. And I'm wondering, I mean, there's a suggestion of kind of open possibility as well as quite a bit of constraint within that. And I'm wondering, if you could talk about what those different ways of thinking about time are doing for us.

Ethan:
Deep dive. I would say, so, okay, that text was the tempo indication that I

gave in an orchestral piece in 2017 [entitled *Mojave Music…from a certain perspective*].

Samuel:
They would have hated that as a tempo direction.

Ethan:
Hated it. Could not do it. I think intimacy is hard for a classical musician. You know, I think the question of intimacy is very important here, partly to, I mean in several ways, the relationship between Lina and Ruth, between me and Ruth, knowing her through Lina, and me and Lina. And the three of us with Simon, we had a bi-weekly jour fixe. I never got it out of my calendars—it's still going! But anyway, so there are all these long-standing relationships, that are coming into the practice of building the work, that are intimate. And so I guess that's a durational thing and a question, and it addresses the "intimacy." I would leave it there.

"**Endless** Space" I guess the nice thing about this calendar is that it produces potentially endless permutations of the six scores. It is, it has some limits. It has a certain space of harmony, I would say, and a certain amount of like, a certain shape to the sound across the fifteen pieces, but they occur in so many different configurations that I think it would be rather impossible to hear them all. So it is, there's a kind of endlessness there.

And I've always been attracted to how music can feel like a little object, a little thing that you put over there, and then you put another one over here, and then you move them around. This is a contrapuntal practice, right? Putting this thing there and that thing there. Counterpoint is the word that I didn't say before and I would say now. And that counterpoint is what's changing and shifting and producing endless possibilities. None of the pieces, except for this recording of my neighbourhood from a bench that goes on here [gestures to projection], aside from that, none of the pieces is longer than 10 minutes.

Samuel:
Got it.

Ethan:
So that's the "approximately 10 minutes." What else is in the title? "Small Window–"

Samuel:
"Small Window of Time."

Ethan:
Yeah. I mean, you come in to a show like this, and you come in and you check it out. And oh, you got a phone call, then leave, you know? I mean, that happens to me very often. I come in, oh, I have to sit here and wait for a durational show. Well, I said, okay, well, you know what? I'm into it. And then, like, 20 minutes later, I move along. It's a small window of time you come in and experience a show like this, and you know that's cool, that's cool. And what you experience in there is entirely different than what somebody experienced yesterday.

And also, as this calendar is a rather malleable little thing, though I do make mistakes sometimes, I change the show constantly and I'm constantly adding little things. I have these cats that I really like to add in sometimes, and these little coin flips. It's something that I get to do intuitively while I'm here and be present with the work. And then when I leave, I let go because I can't touch it anymore. I can't anymore be in the room, so I can't respond by changing something. So it's also a question of my intimacy with the things making this space, I guess. What was your other question? Do we have time for one more?

Samuel:
We could pivot out and then come back.

Kaitohu Director Ruth Buchanan:
Pivot out and come back?

Samuel:
Well, there might be questions…

Ethan:
Ruth, if you have something to talk about?

Ruth Buchanan:
Are you opening to the floor, is that what you're saying? Was there a question from the floor at this stage?

Audience member one:
Yes, hi. I wanted to ask something about maintenance, and you kind of, like, talk about maintenance and the small tweaks and adjusting to the things and sounds that come into the space. Is there also a type of maintenance that is resistant to the new introductions, is there that creating a, kind of more tension? Is there a space and maintenance for that?

Ethan:
Oh thanks for that. That's exactly what I'm working with when I'm doing

the maintenance work. Like sometimes I'm just on something and I'm keeping them chugging along and whatever happens, we'll chug along. Keep it moving. Keep on moving. Keep moving, whatever happens. And that consistency then pushes against this endless moving around of different configurations, right? So that's, that's exactly where the fun is.

There's a word for that, a little musical term for y'all to learn. You probably know it anyway—it's dissonance. The word dissonance. You push into the dissonance. I always find this to be interesting, you get into it and then you come out and it'll be fine. It's like, like there's a new way. You know, there's a little bit of a lift to that, a crazy kinetic energy. I mean, that's the maintenance, it's really getting my hands on it in the sense that, okay, all right, it's pushing up and I'll push back, or it's pushing something like this in different ways, or it's not listening, it's actually never listening to me. It never listens. No matter what I do, it never listens. So I don't know, that's what I'd say about that.

Audience member two:
Hi. Yeah, I've got a question about your relationship between, the relationship between temporality and polyphony. Do you think of polyphony in terms of linear versus non-linear polyphony? Like, say, an example of polyphony would be like Bach chorales, and an example of non-linear polyphony would be like Bulgarian folk music, or really French music, or Indigenous, Pacific, Oceanic. Does some relationship like that form your practice?

Ethan:
I think about it a bit differently than that, or I phrase it differently than that. I hear you, I think that for me, writing a Bach chorale, in that style, there's a technique to it. There's a certain skill. It's like doing Sudoku, which I cannot do, and parallel crossing problems in chess and all of those things. But it is a little bit like that, or I always think of it a little bit like that. And that's a kind of technique for a very specific circumstance, right? And there's other kinds of circumstances which require different kinds of techniques, some of which I have no technique for.

And going back to collaboration, that's where collaboration becomes pretty interesting, and that's rather non-linear. It's just relationships with people. You know, I'm working on a show right now, but they, like, really want a waltz in the style of Strauss and I'm like, I really don't want to do that. But I mean, maybe I have to, you know? So that's, that's not something I planned.

Audience member three:
Hi. This is probably a really basic question, but sort of related a little bit to what Samuel was saying about the fact that, I think Samuel mentioned

notation, and there's a sort of a mystical or a magical kind of component to that. But it feels like, I guess, in relation to the bigger question, "is language large enough?" like a lot of, a lot of what we're seeing here seems to start using the notation and it's a translation of that. Yeah, so there's an onomatopoeia, the mirror work, and the work is still rooted within a musical notation. I'm just wondering whether that is enough, because sometimes people who don't read music need something else.

Ethan:
Well, well there's an emoji of a lung right there [gestures to wall]. So that's the breath. You know, that's how I read those. Or how I remember it. Here's the Cat in the Hats hand. Some of you might have read *The Cat in the Hat* at some point. This is a coin flip. This is a "hmm". And here's the emoji for "hmm". So actually, I think the language is rather present, and I think the language is rather clear. I mean, I think Lina's done an excellent job, and been really concrete about it.

The words, of course, on the floor are yes, coming from Italian, problematic maybe… "poco a poco." Then there's some English, also problematic, "staggering, breathe, hold and move freely." Over here, it's only text. And the mirror could be anything. I felt a little bit notey yesterday, so I gave that. But there are instructions there that are written in English. So for those who can read in it, because it's legible. And here are only, it's images of hands. There is no standard notation being used.

I do come from that practice [of notation], and I work with that, and Lina finds that interesting. And there's definitely a question of the score fetish in the world of composers, and some people really love a very complicated looking thing, let me tell you. And there's a kind of, there's a joy in that, a pleasure in that that some people get, that I don't necessarily. But Lina, as a graphic designer and as a bookmaker, her work is entirely around the placement of things and the reason for the things on a page, the composition, and then across the book, across all that, you know? So there is a lot of questions of visual communication that rather exceed musical notation, that I would just invite you take a look around, that's all.

Ruth:
I have a question.

Ethan:
Sure.

Ruth:
And it's going back to the invitation of dissonance, and how you can play or compose into dissonance. And then I guess just thinking about dissonance in an exhibition context… Is dissonance for a composer,

maybe the same thing as friction for an artist? Is dissonance and friction the same? I'm curious, if you have any, any of you have a thought. I mean, I also love to be really specific about words. So you can say it's a boring question, but I'm curious there, what is the difference between a dissonant and friction?

Antonia:
My first thought when you said dissonance before and you went, "Oh, it's a musical term," was, don't they have dissonance in visual art?

Ruth:
Ahh yeah.

Antonia:
I kind of thought perhaps it was a term that you could have. But I think perhaps, like resistance, friction, all of these things sit around it, right? So, and we, when we're taught music, we're kind of taught, like, these two notes together are consonant, meaning they go together well, and there are varying degrees between consonant and dissonant. And I've always kind of thought, oh no, those dissonant ones, I love those, that's consonant to me. So, that's my little offer. Would you like to speak to that [to Ethan]?

Ethan:
There was a phrase that Fred Moten was actually writing about in, I think it was in *The Undercommons*, where he was writing about Schoenberg, who was a Jewish Viennese composer who is, by many stretches of the imagination, responsible for establishing a practice of "New Music" composition, what we call Neue Musik, and he, the way his phrase was translated into English, is "emancipation of dissonance." Emancipation of dissonance.

And Moten points out the fact that that word has a very specific ring to it in an American context, what emancipation was meaning there. And I think I wouldn't dwell on that particular dissonance further, but I would invite you all to check out *The Undercommons* for a better way of putting it. Dissonance then is emancipated from its position of being frictive because for the practice that Schoenberg was developing, which responded to Brahms and related to this kind of music, where there were specific ways that dissonance was handled, namely, it would handle the dissonance to bring it to the consonance, exactly as Antonia pointed out, bringing it to balance—consonants sounding together, dissonance sounding against. So there was this idea of friction that in the emancipation of dissonance and, or it was supposed to. But of course, everybody knows that Schoenberg's music is very thorny, frictive music. So the question remains, like, has dissonance been emancipated? And I,

yeah you want to say something [to Samuel]?

Samuel:
I mean, not especially, except to say that when I think in a musical context in terms of my own work, I think of dissonance in terms of kind of sonic output. But I would think more around friction in terms of practice and what's required. There's a kind of generative–

Ruth:
Charge?

Samuel:
…yeah, that, that is required. I'm not sure. I don't know which composers would think through it that way, but I think we often think about constraints or frictions or tensions as kind of creative generators, perhaps in the same way that many visual artists do. Being aware of time, and since I have the mic, I think it's important that we turn to one of the pressing issues of the exhibition, which is the clamshell, which you didn't address earlier, and I don't know if you would care to now.

Ethan:
Okay. In three minutes, something's gonna happen in the soundscape. I have that much time to talk about the clam, that's good. So, the clam. Lina has a really great way of making a mood board. It's just, I mean, you know, as a really great bookmaker knows how to make a really beautiful mood board, let me tell you. And on it—for the mirror—we had thought that the mirror is important for the work, the mirror has a kind of like a question about narcissism, a question about the ego, a question about the self, like a reflection, reflective for people who are coming into the space, then the word gets off the wall a little bit. And we thought it would be really cute inside a clam. Like, wouldn't that be nice? Like a little clam shell, like a little compact that you use to check your [demonstrates opening a compact and looking into it], to check your, whatever. You know, that was where the clamshell came up.

Ruth:
I saw the mood board with this perfectly depicted thing.

Ethan:
And you were like, and Ruth was like, I have a shell in exactly that colour. And, where is this from?

Ruth:
Luckily! It's from the Michael Park Steiner School, and I could drop the name of artist Prairie Hatchard-McGill, who's here tonight, and is an alumni, and that was my foot in the door. And they were very happy to

lend us this beautifully-made, oversized clam shell, which comes out once a year at the summer festival.

Ethan:
Yeah, and this year it's coming out twice! It's here until July and then it's going to move on to its, it's a big year for the clam.

Ruth:
It's a big year for the clam.

Ethan:
It's a big year for the clam. And I think shellfish are very sustainable. So that's, yeah, that's pretty much the clam. I mean, since we thought of this as an object, I mean, I think something that's really important for both me and Lina, in the sense of having a laugh, and moving a bit off the page and moving the… And we've been talking about all these words like, in like transgressive intellectual terminology in the past hour. The truth is, we've got a comic strip over here for telling a joke. The projection is all about Pierrot, the Pierrot ensemble is an ensemble that Schoenberg was known for having sort of invented, let's say. It's a very bad sounding ensemble, famously so. And it's a kind of testing ground for composers. Well, I've never written for it, and I decided to finally, to write one when this show came up. And, Pierrot, you know, he's the sad clown, always with a sad face, you know, that one? So there's something funny, there's something tragic, there's something playful. And I think the clam brings us there. It's also, you know, there's something Dada, I think that's something I would say about it. Any other questions?

Audience member one:
Yeah, me again… the stairs?

Ethan:
[Choral sounds play in the space marking 7pm.] Well, now it's actually time to take us up the stairs. Again, back to the mood board. I can ask Lina if she doesn't mind putting it in her public lectures. Right on the mood board there are these images from the Yonemoto Brothers' films. There's a really beautiful film called *Made in Hollywood*, and it has a bit this kind of, this is the Hollywood sky in fact [gestures to projection], and it's under this colour [points to the pink-peach lights in the gallery]. And there's a scene in the film where the main character is sitting on the stairs looking out into the sky, and we thought that that was a really beautiful image for the kind of environment that we wanted to make, sort of physically, sensuously with regard to light and perspective, also in the space. So that's where the stairs sort of derived, yeah.

Samuel:
And there’s nothing better than finishing on time.

Ruth:
I know. With the choral music in the background.