

Editorial Preface

Alterations: Art, Performance, and Creation at a Time of Global Pandemic

Prior to releasing a call for papers for contributions to the *Intonations'* themed issue, "Alterations: Art, Performance, and Creation at a Time of Global Pandemic," we worked through several deliberations. Mainly, we pondered the parameters of the themed issue. The Editorial Board and Editors-in-Chief agreed to focus on the prevailing social, political, and economic adjustments brought by Covid-19 realities. Hence the title, "*Alterations.*" No one was emancipated from the widespread feelings of apprehension about the future and strength of our relations, practices, and systems in the world. This has been a time of vast uncertainty and unprecedented transformation on global, national, regional, and trans-institutional scales. The implications of Covid-19 permeate myriad discussions on the necessity to rethink, reconstitute, and broaden our approaches and practices as visual artists, designers, musicians, performers, and academics. The communal experience of massive death and physical isolation happening at a time of a global racial reckoning (from the world witnessing the murder of George Floyd on camera) compels us to engage with the awakening of a collective global conscience which surpasses the understanding of what Covid-19 has inflicted upon us. In this monumental turn in human history, we attempt, in this issue, to reflect on our responses to evolving cultural practices and perspectives in the Arts. A diverse group of contributors have offered us more than we could have imagined. They have encouraged us to ponder about the questions:

- What is the role of the Arts in a pandemic world?
- In what ways does Covid-19 revolutionize our understanding of what we do as professionals of the Arts?
- Do we face existential threats?
- What has been taken away from us and what must we re-cultivate in order to maintain a continuity of particular disciplinary practices?
- Can our disciplines withstand these *alterations*, and at what cost?
- And how can we conceive of "community" as a socio-political site upon which disparate individuals are tangibly connected?

The themed issue unveils, prevailingly interdisciplinary artists and scholars, who have managed to sustain their work during a time of extraordinary adversity.

The opening piece in this issue is Patrizio McLelland's interview with Mouna Andraos, co-founder of *Studio Daily Tous les Jours*, a design studio from Montreal specializing in the creation of interactive installations in public spaces. This transcribed interview reflects a dialogue between two individuals revealing the implications of artistically facilitating human interaction in the time of Covid-19. We have come to understand the role interviews may play on this academic platform to be that of an invitation to bring us closer to one another, and to contest the importance of esoteric linguistic structures upon which academia is often predicated. This is particularly relevant in the context of a post-pandemic world where social barriers became the norm in our daily lives and professional practices. Fostering play in the urban sphere invites us to reflect on the value and challenges of shared urban spaces in a post-pandemic world.

Second in the issue is "Puppetry and Public Spectacle: Creating Community During Covid" by Skye Strauss. Strauss explores the idea of creating and performing during Covid-19 restrictions. Based on *Flight of the Phoenix*, a puppet pageant at Northwestern University, the author examines the alignment between the design of the project and the challenge of physical distance and contact. Participants and performers co-created a physically distanced public performance reframing notions of the materiality of performance within a safe and productive space. Strauss reflects on the inventiveness springing from Covid-19: physical and social limitations exploring the notions of space, participation, and (a)venue. The author proceeds with a discussion of the instantiation of substances that went into building the teams and props, inviting us to ponder the considerations we make when it comes to the aestheticization of art. Strauss offers a notion of the reliance on labour as a way of coming together through gathering and creative exploration. The author also speaks of the impact of the audience on the creative process, encouraging us to ponder the modes of engagement within a public sphere. The connection between the audience and performers invites acts of radical listening while negotiating the ways we craft individual and public experiences.

Our third contribution is a collaboratively written piece. In "Live-streamed performance & intercultural education: Creative solutions to online world music pedagogy in the Covid-19 pandemic," David Cobb, Silviu Ciulei, Ramin Yazdanpanah, and Felicia K. Youngblood present a unique perspective on the significance of adapting a new model in world music education to the conditions of social isolation. Shaping their discourse in relation to ethnomusicology, music education, as well as social justice pedagogy; this collective of scholars, musicians, educators, and activists unveil how their approaches to altered learning modalities both affirmed and expanded the roles of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian cultural mediators in the virtual classroom. With ethnographic reflexivity, the authors elucidate how the Maharajah Flamenco Trio had to navigate Covid-19 adversity when intending to provide rigorous and innovative,

flamenco nuevo-based education for students largely unfamiliar with the nuances of world music at large, and with Andalusian music in specific. With the application of the empowering paradigm of intercultural-based learning, equitable practices are brought to the fore in countering problematic tendencies of cultural appropriation inherent in hackneyed, pre-Covid-19 models of world music education.

The fourth piece “Crossing an Impossible Threshold: Creating a Transdisciplinary Process in the Heart of the Pandemic,” by Nicole Schafenacker and Léda Davies, delves into the conversation of creation and sharing from an interdisciplinary perspective. Schafenacker and Davies retain and speak (back/forth) to their previous roles: playwright (Nicole) and director (Léda) as a basis of opening up the dramaturgical and philosophical facets that (in)form *Fish at the Bottom of the Sea* (a play by Nicole Schafenacker) as a collaborative undertaking. The authors broach a discussion that challenges our understanding of disciplinary boundaries while remaining faithful to the realities of creating and sharing art in a time of a global pandemic. Theatre and Circus intersect and transact in the intricate process of (re)formulation of the project’s dramaturgical contours. Thematic undertones of grief, isolation, longing, and healing persist in negotiating the meaning-making and aesthetic endeavors. The authors invite us to consider the post-production part of the process as part and parcel of the performance’s life through reflection. In their retrospective discussions, they relay the importance of adopting a mode of working which constantly challenges the tension between structure and creative possibility. Schafenacker and Davies craft a dramaturgical intervention that unsettles the idea of hierarchy in performance. The thought-provoking discussion sets us on a critical journey through which we stay creatively and intentionally alert on the process of prioritizing the stylo-thematic needs of a production. The discussions explored here prod us to lean into the ongoing conversations about the radical ways through which we can reform and reframe the ways we create, interrogate, and share artistic work. Referencing *Fish at the Bottom of the Sea*, the authors further explore questions around the idea of a liminal space through the desire to cross an impossible threshold in the dramaturgy of the project. In this engaging examination, the authors also challenge methodological contours of embodying different states of matter and moving through stages of grief while speaking to the notion of virtuosity in performance.

Concluding this themed issue is an innovative rendering of a videotaped performance by violinist Erin James, of a fictitious fourth movement to Robert Schumann’s *Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105*. Drawing on the images of characters that populate her performance, her accompanying essay focuses on the theme of characterization – personages such as Eusebius, Florestan, Maestro Raro, and various *commedia dell’arte* characters that haunt Robert Schumann’s musical and music-critical works. This starting point prompts a meditation on the themes of isolation,

mental health, and the fine line between creative and destructive fantasy in Schumann's personal life which extends to parallel themes as James addresses the comparable nature that such a subjective disposition shares with her own experience of social isolation during the pandemic.

We hope the rhythms, questions, and discussions shared within these articles will engage your creative, explorative, and critical impulses. The negotiations, examinations, and reflections echo across varying contours of experience and investigation as to offer us the chance to further a conversation that continues to evolve as we come to terms with all the forces (re)shaping our socio-cultural consciousness.

To all our readers, authors, editorial board members, and supervisors, thank you for your generosity and curiosity to indulge, share, create, converse, and reflect with us.

Editors-in-Chief,

Mariana Soares Espindola and Emily Legleitner (Art & Design)

Mũkonzi Mũsyoki and Abigail Quaye (Drama)

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