Intonations

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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)
Ziyad Marcus (Music)

MIXITY: Fostering Play in the Urban Sphere

PATRIZIO MCLELLAND

Mixity (Mixité): social diversity (ReversoDictionary)... culturally speaking: of or relating to artistic or social pursuits or events considered to be valuable or enlightened (Collins Dictionary).

As the initial brunt of the ongoing pandemic comes to a close, we are left with a world that will have changed drastically. Public spaces, and the ways in which we collectively interact with them and one another alike, will need to be redefined. Harmoniously balancing form, function and value across stakeholders is a necessity in the public environment, and investigating outcomes in the shifting nature of these spaces has always been the quest of both their *maker* and their *user*.

Montréal-based designers *Atelier Daily tous les jours* have had widespread success in creating experiential spaces of *play* offering unique interactions for the individual. Continually striving to learn from every project, these designers of public spaces must have one eye on critical past outcomes, and one eye on how the future can and will force them to *unlearn*— an even more pressing issue in the context of the pandemic. In the following interview excerpts, *Daily tous les jours'* director, Mouna Andraos, offers a glimpse into the core tenets of the studio, the realities of dealing with cities as clients and how important it is to identify the parts of our practice that are essential to our *making*.

Excerpts from an interview with Mouna Andraos, co-founder, Daily tous les jours, June 2020.

Patrizio McLelland: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, I know that you and everyone must be busy these days.

Mouna Andraos: My pleasure.

PM: Before we get started, I wanted to give you some background. My name is Patrizio McLelland. I was born and raised in Montreal and I am a musician, artist and now student. I started in [Design and Computation Arts, Concordia University] last Fall [2019], and the program has really re-shaped and redefined the way I think about systems, interactions, urban spaces and design in general.

Having grown up [in Montreal] and looking at your practice over the past 10 years, there is a reflection between city life values and the studio's core tenets. *Daily tous*

les jours have such a keen eye when it comes to public spaces. How they can be transformed and reimagined, and how elements of curiosity, fun, reconnecting with nature, and accessibility can greatly improve the quality of life for citizens. This is my personal experience as a user-interactor. So, in summary: I've been a big fan for a long time.

MA: Thank you!

PM: There is accessibility value in creating complex output that is attractive from very simple user input. How important do you think ease-of-use is in these scenarios?

MA: There are a few principles we try and apply with our work, what we call the *invitation* and the *clarity of invitation* (also called affordance of an interface): how clearly it communicates what is expected of it from the user's point-of-view. One can choose to obscure the invitation, but then communicating that becomes the purpose of the installation itself. For most of the work we try to put out in public space, this is critical for its success.

But at the same time, it does not mean that everything needs to be instantaneously understood. There could be a ramp up of learning and teaching and that happens through various feedback mechanisms that we have to give the user.

Start with the clear invitation. I do something that is expected or I understand what is expected, and I get feedback on that (positive or negative) to slowly teach me what I am supposed to be doing (see Fig. 1.). Depending on the context you are in, you want to make sure that the duration of the first exchange is pretty short because you might lose their attention. However, if you are in the context of a gallery space where people want to engage, you can anticipate a longer moment to give feedback, to be a bit more sophisticated, and then build up. I think it's also interesting to take into account more advanced users and usages, as long as you can reward everyone.

PM: How willing do you think people are to learn through an installation? In a public space where there are allowances and considerations, unlike a regulated gallery space, how willing are people on the street to really go the whole way?

MA: I think there's a conscious learning. There might be unconscious learning as well. People are willing to engage. And as long as you give them feedback and show them that they are moving forward, most people are willing to give you part of their attention before they can really jump on board.

But then you ask the question of the *whole way*, and the whole way is another thing. You can design different depths, complexities and the more you do that, the more

the number of users willing to go the whole way drops. But that is okay. It does not mean that we shouldn't plan for them. But there might be some features that are for less than 10% of your users.

Fig. 1. *Musical Shadows*: An investigation into how our bodies can be invited to find new ways to move within space, *Musical Shadows* sonifies our movements, using shadows cast by the sun to trigger sonic events. Pictured here at Ars Electronica 2019, *Musical Shadows* has found a permanent home in Mesa, Arizona. Photograph from Knowledge Capital. Used in accordance with Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

PM: It's almost as though you add elements in to attract those people who are willing to go further.

MA: Definitely. One thing that we design in our work is what we call different levels of engagement. From the beginning, ensuring there is an opportunity that engages both a viewer and a passerby who doesn't stop, but who is witnessing this in the presence of their environment. Then, there is the user who stops and doesn't want to engage. There's the one who stops and gives you ten seconds of attention and observes others, all the way to the one who comes back often and explains to others how things work. For us, it's important to design for all types of participation. We also try to value all of them and not cast judgement. It's not the repeat user who is the most valuable because it's the diversity of experiences that will create a more vibrant public space. You don't

necessarily want to create a place that's going to be completely closed for external people because it's just hard-core users who know how to engage with it.
PM: That creates such a varied group of stakeholders.

MA: That's what we want to encourage in the public realm. You want to encourage that mixity and cohabitation in general, and it translates into our user groups.

PM: The end result of a project can often be worlds away from the initial spark of an idea. How do you manage expectations with clients and regulatory bodies? What core tenets do you hold onto against the changing nature of these projects?

MA: Projects are a constant reshuffling, redesigning and readjusting. And, although it would be fantastic to have zero constraints, they are often positive in the sense that they challenge us to consider what the essence of a project is, and that is the one thing we have to fight for. Everything else should be up for discussion, if it needs to be.

So, in a funny way, constraints are a good editor -"that part isn't so useful, maybe we could do something else instead. But that element, that is the essence that we're trying to keep. Let's defend it while circling around the rest."

PM: Do you feel like that defence works? You're able to reduce a project to its most essential reflection of the values of the studio. Do you feel like you get a lot of pushback from municipal entities?

MA: It's complicated. We have a project right now that we have been trying to develop for a while, and the city is hiring us. But then 'the city' is never one cohesive thing. You could have one organization or champion within the city who is trying to bring a designer on board, who is trying to address some questions pertaining to a group of citizens or an area in the city. Then there are all sorts of legal, engineering, health and safety stakeholders. To be honest, I still think we haven't nailed the right balance. We've had to redesign three times; the concept is the same, but the execution has changed quite a bit.

Sometimes it can be long and painful. For temporary work, it's easier. Depending on the situation, you don't have to follow all the rules or directions, and the city— not the political body but the physical city— is a mix of authorities: one sidewalk is owned by the city, the other is a private consortium, the other is federal, and so on. If you say "we're going to take our flag and move it 100 metres this way" suddenly you fall under a whole new set of regulations. We try all the different angles, and hopefully we make it through (see Fig. 2.).

PM: The studio has helped shape the landscape of public spaces in many different cities. Given the impressive work that you've contributed, would it be safe to assume that you have a clear idea as to what the client expectation is, both in a project and proposal sense? What elements do you feel they prioritize in a proposal? Is there a winning combination of factors?

Fig. 2. *Musical Swings*: By far one of the most popular activations from *Daily tous les jours*, this installation has seen permanent and touring status in over a dozen cities across the globe since 2011. The swingset, something most people have built memories on, is coded with rich emotional attachments, creating an attractive invitation. With the swingset as the catalyst, this installation creates a kind of feedback loop; using fond memories as a basis to forge new ones, and music to amplify the collaboration – the latter a recurring theme in their practice. Photograph from Cushy Creative. Used in accordance with Creative Commons License Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).

MA: It depends on which jurisdiction you fall within. If you want to work in public spaces in Montreal, you're going to be dealing with the city, but sometimes there are bodies which are given the authority to manage and decide, and they have their own constraints.

Now we're working with [*Société de développement commercial*] on specific areas, and they have their own rules. If you're in a park it's going to be completely different than the *Vieux-Port*, where it's not even the city who is involved anymore. It very much depends on who and where.

I think that everywhere there are trendsetters; people who understand the objective of these kinds of interventions at the city level. These objectives are about creating places for people to gather and create healthy lifestyles. But then there are others who resort to the tactics to do that, and make it a requirement instead of an objective; this is where I think we lose opportunities for innovation. Suddenly the brief is no longer about 'what can we do to get residents to occupy specific locations', it becomes 'can you create an audiovisual interactive thing'? When we are putting forth the solution ahead of the problem, this is when it becomes a challenge.

Sometimes the audience will think they know what they need exactly, 'we need video mapping projection here', but it doesn't always mean that's what the place requires.

PM: Have you noticed any major discrepancies when working with other municipalities, in relation to the proposal processes in Montreal?

MA: When you work with bodies like [*partenaires du quartier des spectacles*], they've already established a *modus operandi* with the city, so they can accelerate the production. In Montreal there's been an increasing open mindedness to the kind of work that we do. Still, at the end of the day, you are going to have safety concerns; the firefighters have to approve it, engineers etc. But the more projects for every party that succeeds the easier it gets for the next one.

PM: How important is sustainability to the city of Montreal? Is it more attractive to these regulatory bodies to present something eco-didactic with a clear intersection along the lines of sustainability?

MA: Environmental sustainability as a theme is anecdotal. It comes once and a while. Occasionally, you'll have themes in general in the calls for work and interactive installations, probably 50% of the time. Is your question because you're interested in seeing more of these? Curious if they're out there?

PM: I'm curious if they're out there. Environmental sustainability is presented to [Design and Computation Arts] students as a very important parallel. Meaning there's a lot of work to do. Dr. Carmela Cucuzzella's[1] work for instance resonates with me. We

[1] Dr. Carmela Cucuzzella is a Professor in the *Design and Computation Arts* department and is holder of the Concordia University Research Chair in *Integrated Design and Sustainability for the Built Environment* (ideas-be.ca). She is founding co-director of the *Next Generation Cities Institute*. She is also a member of the inter-university and interdisciplinary team of the *Laboratory for the Study of Potential Architecture* (LEAP; concordia.ca).

could zoom out and look at the materials and processes, but I think I'm looking more at the messaging.

MA: I think the [Design and Computation Arts] emphasis on sustainability has been a really important move that happened in the last few years. In a way, it's a reaction maybe to policy makers not making the moves that we as a society need to see coming through. This unfortunately is why you don't see a lot of calls for projects coming through that have that as a top criterion. They are mostly economically-driven. I think this is a major problem that we have as a society at large, that our politicians are not making the moves that are needed. It's a really interesting path [for the program], to try and foster a generation of designers that will bring about change themselves, with the projects and proposals they make. There's a reality that's still out there, no support system to encourage these things or facilitate them.

PM: How do you foresee the environment of installations changing, post-pandemic? How do you think the very nature of public spaces is changing?

MA: We spent quite a bit of time thinking about that, and what the impact is going to be. We put out a research summary (*Better Together: Reflections for pandemic times*) about a month or two ago. It showcases our own understanding of how all of this is going to impact our work.

There are opportunities for change. I don't think we're going to move into a completely touchless society. However, I think that touchless will be an attractive element in an artwork. So, that's one thing to keep in mind. I think we're going to become more creative in what function we can give to public space, because for a while the public space will remain the safest space. For sure we will have some challenges in this city, in the Winter, but for now we can all remain outdoors.

In terms of hybrid spaces, places that are able to be both functional and recreational, gathering will be useful. Very localised experiences, mobile experiences; the notion of the giant big event is going to be probably challenged for at least another year. This means that being able to do more localised experiences will be relevant.

Overall, I think our role as designers for the public sphere is to encourage the public to regain a sense of safety when being in a space. We need to ensure they're out there reclaiming them. Spaces that are free for all that offer an opportunity to do whatever activities one wants to do.

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Puppetry and Public Spectacle: Creating Community During Covid

SKYE STRAUSS

Abstract: *Flight of the Phoenix*, a puppet pageant at Northwestern University, became more than a way to perform despite safety restrictions – the build also became a valuable way to create community during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The shared project of bringing the puppets to life through simple techniques that invited hands-on participation, helped the artistic community to come together again as we emerged from extended isolation. The spark of the project––that began with a simple proposal to fly bird puppets down the lakeshore––brought together a team of designers, makers, directors, puppeteers, and filmmakers, all of whom were excited to excited to contribute their unique ideas and skillsets. As the puppets grew in number, scale, and complexity, the event called for a growing cast of volunteers capable of bringing a bigger version of the final event into being. I interpret the corresponding process of expansion through what artistic director and puppeteer Jim Lasko calls "radical listening" in his essay "The Third Thing" (2014). The finished work of public spectacle reached out to an even wider community as it captured the attention of university students, staff, and faculty and the citizens of Evanston who became surprise witnesses to the birds' triumphant flight. The performance's wordless grace made space for everyone involved to find themselves reflecting on the finished performance as they began to release grief, migrate again after a time of stasis, and collectively celebrate re-emergence.

Keywords: Puppets, Phoenix, Birds, Dragon, Pageant, Parade, Site-Specific, Collective creation

The original idea was simple. At a faculty meeting devoted to ideas for theatre projects that could be safely accomplished at Northwestern University in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, director Dassia N. Posner proposed a puppet performance. Posner and a team of volunteers would build a flock of white birds to fly down the lakeshore on campus. Her puppetry performance aimed to create community in a time of distance and scarcity. The proposed public spectacle would allow Posner to share the creation process with a wide circle of collaborators, including other puppeteers, designers, directors, performers, and makers on campus. The simple scene was also packed with metaphorical potential–the flock in white was peaceful,

mournful, and joyful all at once. In the first of many serendipitous complications, department chair Rives Collins went a step further when he evoked the image of the mythical phoenix. When co-director Jessica Thebus joined the project, she and Posner expanded the event to include a narrative arc based on Collins' suggestion: flocks of birds would gather, be transformed in a mystical fire, and fly away renewed. As it evolved, the *Flight of the Phoenix* would continue to spiral upward and outward––rising, like its mythical namesake, from the ashes of a difficult year.

While the performance was being created, the campus was still locked in a strange stasis. In-person gathering was only possible if participants honoured social distancing protocols and masking mandates. The theatre department began to experiment with puppetry to render that forced distance artful – shadow puppets wielded by a single set of hands made a whole cast of characters for a children's theatre adaptation of *The Jungle Book*, unmasked hand puppets became expressive extensions of their masked puppeteers in *Tomás and the Library Lady*, and––finally––the giant bird puppets in *Flight of the Phoenix* took the performance outside, into the open air. At a time when the theatre department could not deliberately invite any audience to gather on campus, outdoor puppets allowed the performance to capture the attention of an unsuspecting public. It was also agreed early on that the finished performance would be captured on film by Yun Lin and Maximo Grano de Oro (Master of Fine Arts), working with editor Quinn Kelch, to safely expand the audience for the performance by including online viewers. Relying on happenstance in public spaces and streaming performances for an unseen audience placed a renewed emphasis on the joy of *making* theatre that is often eclipsed by the focus on *presenting* it to the public. The puppets became conduits for cooperation that brought a community of makers back together to work as a team after an extended period of isolation.

As self-proclaimed puppet people, Posner and Thebus were prepared to watch their initial idea continue to transform. Puppets can be famously uncooperative in the face of pre-determined directorial concepts. Instead, it is best to be prepared for a de-centralized creative process that allows construction to determine action. Jim Lasko—theatre maker, puppeteer, and former artistic director of Redmoon Theater Company in Chicago—ponders what he calls "radical listening" in "The Third Thing" (2014). Lasko addresses the series of "concentric circles" that form around a puppet or performing object. He states: "In the center sits the artist or artists who initiate the conversation; then moving outward in widening spheres are the groups of interlocutors: artists, collaborators, the formal properties of a given site; and then finally the social situation" (Lasco 2014, 103). *Flight of the Phoenix* arguably followed the same expansive pattern, beginning with Posner and Thebus as the artists at the centre. Moving into conversation with the MFA designers, the directorial duo added a second circle of collaborators with new ideas. Nora Marlow Smith—who became the so-called "bird

captain"—and her fellow MFA designers Kaitlyn Landry and Daphne Agosin Orellana brought in their love of the local and migratory birds that populate the lakefront. Now the real and the mythical could coexist, beginning by reminding audience members of the wonder that is always part of their world. Visually, the white palette in the original idea expanded to include a range of neutral blues, browns, and grays. At first glance, the birds would be a natural, if outsized, part of their environment, making the explosion of their fantastical "fire colours" even more dramatic.

For all the birds to transform into phoenixes, the artistic team had to find a way to create "fire." They began by exploring ideas in production meetings that would adorn the lake-front park with drapery, lights, and archways—architecture that would direct attention to a faux-fire at the centre of the clearing. The team initially imagined the bird puppets bobbing and swooping through the flames that would transform them. Yet fire is, fundamentally, a mobile source of light. Eventually, the fire evolved into a "living" being, a fire wyrm, a wingless, armless subspecies of benevolent dragon drawn from Norse Mythology. The fire wyrm for the *Flight of the Phoenix* was designed by Joe Johnson and Maximo Grano de Oro and created by myself and fellow puppeteer and Ana Díaz Barriga (PhD). The glowing fire wyrm would serve as the catalyst for the birds' metamorphosis. It was accompanied by a colour-guard of fire banners whose bearers, led by Erin Claeys, could run swiftly among the birds in each flock to cue their transformation. With each step, the performance continued to become bigger and more convoluted.

Each large-scale bird, created by an MFA designer, would be accompanied by a pod of smaller birds built by additional volunteers from the broader university community. The theatre staff worked together to support the build while honouring personal boundaries and the university's Covid protocols, guided by production manager Heather Basarab. The scene shop—including Matt Buettner, Shannon Perry, Dylan Jost, and Chris Wych—constructed bodies for twenty-five birds in five different colour palettes while assembling "take home" kits that allowed students to build and decorate the birds' papier mâché heads. The finished bird heads were heavy enough to anchor the puppet's light bodies, made of fabric streamers, as they fluttered in the breeze. The fabric part of the bodies, made in the costume shop under the guidance of Marina Arconti, were rigged to "burst into flame." The scene shop staff's ingenious mechanism, fashioned from binder clips, released streamers in bright red, orange, yellow, gold, and purple over the original feathered body of each bird. Students then built their bird heads and returned them to the shop to be paired with a body. Posner made a series of how-to videos and held papier mâché sessions online, via Zoom, for those working from home in their apartments and dorm rooms. The ability to separate the act of making from the act of puppeteering and to decentralize where the build would happen meant that more students could be involved while still honouring their

own limitations during the ongoing pandemic. The massive scene shop space also allowed those who wanted to gather in person to keep an appropriate social distance. During bird-building events, students at all levels, from undergraduate freshmen to doctoral students, gathered around long, communal tables set out in the sunshine to build "small" birds.

The inspiration for the birds' construction came from the directors' previous experience with different puppetry companies, drawing on both Posner's work with the Puppeteers' Cooperative and Thebus's ongoing work with *The Persephone Project*. Posner learned her giant puppet creation techniques from working with Sara Peattie of the Puppeteers' Cooperative, where she spent years leading giant puppet building workshops in local communities and creating puppets for Boston's annual New Year's Eve First Night parades. Jessica Thebus has long collaborated with members of Redmoon, and the same Bread and Puppet influence that inspired the *Flight of the Phoenix* is also present in her ongoing work with *The Persephone Project*, including their contributions to Extinction Rebellion protests, and the outdoor events she collaboratively staged on the Chicago lakefront as part of *The Art of Spontaneous Spectacle* during the pandemic. Both directors have also worked directly with Bread and Puppet, and their respective companies share Bread and Puppet roots that connect them to a long-standing tradition of political papier mâché puppetry.[1]

In the mid-twentieth century Peter and Elka Schumann's company, Bread and Puppet, began building large-scale papier mâché puppets for protests in New York City before migrating to the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where they continue to create politically relevant puppet performances that tour both nationally and internationally. The company's deliberate emphasis on simple materials has allowed them to continuously operate outside formal funding structures and maintain their political edge by living communally, making do with flour-based paste and cheap paint, and scavenging building supplies from recycled paper and scrap wood to discarded cardboard.[2] Puppetry scholar John Bell called Bread and Puppet's working methods "an economical and practical way to create spectacle theatre" (but it is important to note that the utility of those inexpensive, hands-on methods also has an ethical dimension. By relying on volunteers, Bread and Puppet "make(s) the theatre's connections to the communities it [has] performed in essential through the integration of local community members into the performances" (Bell 2008, 196-197). Beyond the financial benefits of using similar, inexpensive but effective construction methods to build the puppets for *Flight of the Phoenix*, there is also a shared emphasis on building community through active participation.

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[1] Many thanks to Dassia N. Posner for contributing this paragraph on the performance's puppet lineage.

[2] For more on Bread and Puppets from a company member, see Estrin 2010.

The materials used to make the smaller birds were easy to obtain. Cardboard, paper, and paste formed the papier mâché heads while the bodies were made from polyester lining fabric secured to a wire form and raised up into the air by a bamboo pole. Díaz Barriga led Zoom workshops with international participants – giving advice on how to gather supplies so they too could tune in to the "how to" videos from far-flung locations and make their own birds. While birds took shape on campus in Evanston, they were also being made in Pittsburgh, Warsaw, and Seoul. By sending in footage of their finished bird in flight, those participating from a distance could be folded into the documentary film, and, thus, into the bourgeoning flock. The student body expanded the Northwestern across state lines and national borders by staying connected to the on-campus event. The simplicity of the design left space for all the puppet makers to contribute to the kind of multiplicity radical listening encourages, wherein "each voice changes the work itself, takes form, and develops and evokes the next set of iterations, which subsequently must also be heard" (Lasco 2014, 100). Each contributor could diversify the event by making their own positionality visible through the way they stylized their puppet. In the final performance, each bird was different: queer rainbow-coloured birds and multi-cultural birds, abstractly painted birds and identifiable wild species all flocked together.

The common task of working with the papier mâché became a bonding agent. If any puppet or performing object can become a mediator, as in Lasko's theorization, humble papier mâché made of plain paper and paste is arguably an exceptionally useful intermediary. It is created from materials that are readily available, possibly even recycled in a best-case scenario, non-toxic, and simultaneously forgiving for new makers and capable of sculptural beauty in the hands of advanced artisans. The very structure of papier mâché, is described by Eleanor Margolies in her book *Props* as "a laminate–– a material made of layers glued together," feels like a metaphor for finding strength in community as "[t]he layering of the material…makes the new material much stronger" (Margolies 2016, 110). As the layers of paper smooth out the rough contours of the cardboard structure underneath, they create exceedingly sturdy puppets. The ability to withstand rough handling, wind, and weather are instrumental to the projects' continual expansion toward the finished spectacle as they are handed off to newly recruited puppeteers and taken out in public as part of the finished spectacle. Each bird—whether near or far, plain or fanciful—was bonded to its flock by their common material bodies.

Ongoing challenges were answered by an ever-widening circle of artists and craftspeople during the build. The small birds for each pod followed the same construction methods as the originally proposed flock, but the designs for the larger puppets required new techniques. The whole shop staff came together to seek solutions to questions: "How can we create equally light bodies for the large-scale birds in more

complex shapes?" and "What combination of sculptural materials and electronic equipment can give the fire wyrm a portable, internal glow?" True to Lasko's theorization of radical listening, the contributions of disparate collaborators coalesced around the physical objects in their hands as they followed the propensities of their materials toward the puppet's final form. The designers and makers worked in shifts, taking turns occupying the same space to keep a safe distance. Yet they were never working in a vacuum: they built on the foundational labour of others, and they could see progress being made on the other puppets laid out on adjacent tables or propped up on makeshift stands fashioned from bamboo poles and traffic cones nearby. The final aesthetic for the whole performance was a product of a fruitful environment where the designers and makers drew inspiration from each other's works in progress.

Ideas that began as scale models, made on kitchen tables and desktops in student apartments, became full-scale creations suited to an outdoor performance. The bigger birds of the lake-front—the kestrel, swallow, great blue heron, seagull, and goose—were many times the size of the smaller birds and took on their own distinct style as the MFA designers and shop staff found their way through a thicket of decisions about how each one should be made. The Heron, Swallow, and Kestrel became painterly, molded by designers Smith, Landry, and Orellana and daubed with paint by resident scenic artist Jim Weber until they resembled impressionist paintings. The simple features and bright-white body of the seagull, designed by Posner, made for the most dramatic transformation from feathers into flame. The head of the Canadian Goose, whose maker Kaitlyn Landry chose to bring this bird to life as a fellow Canadian citizen, became startlingly realistic instead, formed over a curved armature out of lighter, thinner layers of paper that created a smooth finish, with eyes that showed a natural highlight because they were made from repurposed Christmas bulbs that were incorporated into the head during the puppet's construction. To match the distinctive style of each head, scene shop craftspeople helped to design bodies that were equally unique. In addition to the streamers that connected them to the smaller birds, these bodies were also defined by wind-sock like cylinders formed with wire and three-dimensional oval bodies formed with round reed, all covered with fabric that branched out into broad wings and long graceful necks.

The fire wyrm needed to be a distinctly different type of beast. The research called for it to be more lantern-like: able to show the lights within to full effect. I joined the team of makers, alongside Díaz Barriga to build the fire wyrm out of round reed and cover it with fabric. I learned to work with reed from Rough House Theater Company, a group of Chicago puppeteers who regularly offer workshops in addition to their congoing season of puppet performances[3]. Their method called for the pliable pre-soaked reed to be wrapped in cotton string, soaked in white glue, to hold it in place as

[3] For more on Rough House Theater Company, visit: https://www.roughhousetheater.com.

it dried into its new shape. This method is comparatively eco-friendly, but not particularly fast. Díaz Barriga met me in the scene shop on my first day of construction to teach me her method, which she learned from teaching artist and puppeteer Anne Cubberly, of Hartford, Connecticut[4]. Díaz Barriga showed me how to use an internal armature made of cardboard, to facilitate a more complicated shape, and fasten the same round reed with zip ties and Gorilla Glue instead of string and paste, to form a stronger, faster bond. Together, we laid down the first of three layers of round reed to begin the fire wyrm's construction. As with the papier mâché, this technique also brought with it another lineage of puppetry and more opportunities for teamwork during the creative process.

Once the round reed form within the head was complete, the next step was to cover it with fabric so that head and body would become a unified part of the total spectacle. To keep the fire wyrm linked to the rest of the performance's visual vocabulary, it needed to echo the birds' fiery red, orange, and yellow. The body was composed of long streamers of the same "fire coloured" fabric used for the birds' transformation affixed to a double layer of net so that the final puppet was equal parts positive and negative space. The finished cylindrical "skin" of the wyrm was wrapped around wire hoops holding strings of battery-powered lights, installed by Peter Anderson and Mike Trudeau from the lighting department. The final touches were added by hand-sewing fabric and layers of trim to the primary skin, stretched over the cane form, and installing the eyes, made from faceted globes provided by Anderson to refract the lights shining within. As the puppet moved between makers across different departments it began, in Lasko's words, to "reveal itself," making its way through a series of compromises between idea and material reality toward its first flight (Lasko 2014, 98).

Once the puppets were complete, the next phase brought together teams of puppeteers to bring them to life. The birds flew in pods, with the small single-operator birds gathered around the goose, kestrel, seagull, heron, and swallow, all of which had three to five operators. The fire wyrm needed six dedicated puppeteers, plus additional standard bearers for the fire banners. The MFA directing students, Hamid Dehghani, Ismael Lara, Katie Lupica, and Tor Campbell, and faculty members Halena Kays and Shana Cooper joined the project to help create choreography for each team. Using warm-up exercises and drills, each group of puppeteers quickly learned to move together so that the body of their puppet followed the head, the wings stayed aligned, and the puppet's gaze was filled with intention as its body was endowed with breath. Through trial and error, the teams discovered how their assigned puppet moved: turning the heron's head at the end of its long neck, made of flexible fabric; flapping the seagull's flowing wings; and shaking out the fire wyrm's streamers. Working together, the directorial team found ways to link the most impactful movement vocabulary to the

[4] For more on Cubberly, visit: https://www.annecubberly.com.

story of transformation. This step required a shift in mindset as the directors, faculty members, and puppeteers learned to shift their attention away from their fellow human beings and toward their puppets. The masks the puppeteers wore out of necessity as a Covid precaution ultimately served the performance by directing attention toward the visible face of each puppet. As Posner explained at the first rehearsal, fixing your eyes on the puppet, giving it your full attention, is, in some cultures, even believed to shift your soul into the puppet, so that as the puppet flies, you fly, too.

The path toward performance relied on a fundamental belief on the part of directors Posner and Thebus that "if we build them, they will come." They had to trust that students would pick up their kits, complete them, and return them on time; that the completed puppets would find puppeteers, who were willing to put in the time to rehearse and perform; and that the performance would find an audience on the lakefront in fair weather, at a time when the world in general remained cloistered. They relied on the same "persistent combination of some of the most traditional elements of puppet theatre" that drives the work of Bread and Puppet, where, according to Bell, "the use of simple materials, direct means, and a strong connection to community" culminates in "a reflection and articulation of community conscience" (Bell 2008, 210). Building puppets and building community become synonymous acts. The final step is to perform for the public who, like the artistic team, are given license to shape the production as both viewers and interpreters of the performance.

Figure 1: *Kestrel in Flight*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

To begin the pageant, each pod of birds assembled at a different location and processed to a small island off the eastern shore of the campus (see Figures 1-5). Once on the island, the flocks flowed towards an open clearing accompanied by the sound of

wind chimes and a chorus of acoustic instruments, which included chair Rives Collins on guitar.

Figure 2: *Seagull Flock*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Figure 3: *Heron Flock*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Figure 4: *Goose in Flight*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Figure 5: *Swallow in Flight*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

The fire wyrm took to the field first, circling in the centre while waiting for the birds to establish the outer perimeter of the circle. Once the birds arrived, the wyrm walked up to the first bird, the heron, and they bowed to each other (see Figure 6). The wyrm gave a mighty shake and snaked upward in a wave that moved from head to tail and from tail to head.

Figure 6: *The Fire Wyrm Bows*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

The fire wyrm threw off sparks—the banners of flame that danced among the birds in each pod. True to the story of the Phoenix, each bird burst into "flame" when a quick release sent a fluttering set of streamers tumbling over its wings, transforming the natural into the fantastical. The wyrm greeted each bird in turn: kestrel, swallow, seagull, and goose before it left the clearing (see Figures 7-9).

Figure 7: *Fire Wyrm*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Figure 8: *Heron Transformation*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Figure 9: *Goose Transformation*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

Renewed and joyful, the chorus of birds in their vibrant new fire-coloured plumage burst into song, joining in singing a variation on a traditional Appalachian spiritual, by Michael-Ellen Walden, that began with the repeated refrain: "Bright morning stars are a-rising" and ended in the hopeful declaration: "Day is a-breakin in my soul." That

refrain alternated with a series of choruses that each echoed through their own triumvirate repetitions:

> We will rise from fire and ashes
> The light of day's a-callin
> Reborn, we'll soar together
> Can you feel your soul awaken?

The song closed with a final refrain, calling on the dawn, before the birds wheeled off down the island and back across the lake, fanning out to circle around the lawn, and finally returning to roost in the scene shop (see Figures 10-11). After sundown, the fire wyrm made a final journey around the centre-lawn, at the heart of the campus, snaking through the trees as it glowed in the darkness.

Figure 10: *Seagull Greets Family*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

As the puppets paraded along the island, they greeted an unsuspecting audience, bobbing past college students who whipped out their cell phones to record, touching down to meet the outstretched hands of children running past, and slowly bending down their heavy heads to greet elderly members of the audience with respect. Performing crowned the proceeding acts of radical listening with a final, expansive circle by folding in an audience "who occupied that same public space, who had no intentional relationship to the event" when they set out to enjoy the lakefront, but who

"witnessed," according to Lasko, "the eruption of spontaneous community" around the spectacle (Lasko 2014, 102). While the audience online would see the puppet pageant unfold as edited, attending the physical performance added an additional layer to the experience. Both performers and audience could feel the warmth of the sun and the pull of the wind. Each audience member's point of view depended on their vantage point. They could choose to come in close to see how the individual puppets were made or pull back to suspend disbelief in these magical creatures and better see the choreographed story arc. In the same way that the puppet makers were able to bring their varied perspectives to their work, the audience members were also able to craft individual experiences of the performance. For Lasko, the "spectacle," the culminating public performance, ultimately "holds in lively tension each expanding circle of the conversation, ending with the sphere that includes all those witnessing it and the space around them" as it brings the audience into the creative fold (Lasco 2014, 103). The sheer scale of this kind of performance, the archetypal nature of its narrative, and its wordless grace allowed it to encompass a range of meanings for both artists and audience. At the circle's widest point, this performance of *Flight of the Phoenix* simultaneously celebrated migration after a period of stasis, told a resurrection story that centred survival, and became a way to memorialize loss and begin to let go of grief.

Figure 11: *Returning to Roost*. Photograph from Justin Barbin Photography.

The simplicity of the performance opens it up to myriad interpretations, and that flexibility is what will continue to give this project life long after the Covid-19 pandemic has ended. The hope is that this will become an annual event – celebrating

the point in the year where new students are invited to campus as others graduate, marking a renewable moment of transformation for the university community. As a campus tradition, the performance can continue to grow and change. Every new group of students who come to participate in the messy joy of making will place their own mark on the performance by simultaneously adding another unique bird to the flock and becoming part of an ongoing story. If you would like to learn more about the project from the directors and see the full performance on video, visit *Flight of the Phoenix*.

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Live-streamed performance & intercultural education: Creative solutions to online world music pedagogy in the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond

SILVIU CIULEI, DAVID COBB, RAMIN YAZDANPANAH, FELICIA YOUNGBLOOD

Abstract: This article provides creative solutions for online world music pedagogy that were developed in response to the widespread need for digital education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Innovations in the synchronous presentation of online music courses and performances influenced the authors to collaborate on ways to create space for interaction between students and musicians who share their music and experiences as cultural experts. This approach led to the development of the World Music Guest Artist Series, which allows for experiential learning and intercultural exchange through live-streamed performances and interviews with musicians in various global genres and locations. In mapping out the process, experiences, and benefits of our partnership for educators, students, and musicians, we ultimately intend to showcase our model to higher music educators that endeavor to foster experiential learning and intercultural dialogue in their classrooms through collaboration with cultural mediators, whether in a virtual or in-person learning environment.

Keywords: World Music, Pedagogy, Covid-19, Intercultural Education, Online Teaching, Collaboration, Coronavirus, Cultural Studies

This article addresses a shift in world music pedagogy towards a collaborative model conceived and executed during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, bridging educators and musicians from various global locations, cultural perspectives, and genres. From redesigning online rehearsals because of sound delay and latency issues to creating new arrangements for socially distanced, in-person ensembles alongside the development of strategies for classroom access, music educators have drastically transformed their approaches to teaching during this time.[1] Whether teaching performance or lecture-based courses, and often at the expense of providing the robust instruction that was offered pre-pandemic, educators have had to alter their pedagogical methods including content delivery and assessments. In the context of teaching world

[1] For further discussion on such music pedagogical shifts during the Covid-19 era, see: American Choral Directors Association et al. 2020; Nichols 2020; and Biasutti et al. 2021.

music survey courses in tertiary education, these shifts affect collaborations between instructors and guest musicians who are often invited to the classroom, as cultural mediators, to provide live performances.[2]

It is under these new circumstances that the authors seek to find ways to sustain relationships between musicians and students through online teaching platforms. When challenged with the need to create new pedagogical tactics, the authors developed a model for musical and intercultural education in the early pandemic that led to numerous benefits for musicians and students alike. We purposefully choose the term intercultural over multicultural as the focus is on the exchange of dialogue and communication about cultural values between individuals. While the prefix 'multi-' implies a context of many, the prefix 'inter-' implies a betweenness. Therefore, multicultural constitutes the mere existence of multiple cultural representatives in the same space whereas intercultural comprises engagement *between* them, indexing active and purposeful exchanges among people from various cultural backgrounds. We, the authors—a professor and a guest artist ensemble, the Maharajah Flamenco Trio—offer this article as an extensive discussion of the benefits of educational intercultural exchange and elucidate our employed pedagogical model. Through this work, we provide a roadmap for collaboration between performers and academics that accomplishes learning outcomes for the students while meeting the artistic and professional objectives of the performers. In mapping out the process, experiences, and benefits of our partnership, we ultimately intend to showcase our model to higher music educators that endeavor to foster experiential learning and intercultural dialogue in their classrooms through collaboration with cultural mediators, whether in a virtual or in-person learning environment.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of our work and this publication is multifaceted. While scholars such as Patricia Shehan Campbell discuss methodologies for teaching world music that include collaborations with guest performers as cultural mediators, extant literature rarely outlines the practicalities of creating such partnerships.[3] Furthermore, there are no publications that detail the importance, benefits, and processes of continuing pedagogical work with live performers as cultural mediators during the Covid-19

[2] A cultural mediator is someone who interfaces between students and the culture in which they have expertise as members or through long-term involvement such as scholarship and performance in the styles of the culture in question.

[3] See Campbell 2016 for further information on world music pedagogy and the value of including cultural mediators in the classroom (106).

pandemic. In the world music classroom, experiencing live performance with guest musicians and engaging in dialogue with them that focuses on the sharing, discussion, and appreciation of diverse forms of human expression is one way students can develop greater cultural competence to better understand themselves and others. This type of experiential learning is essential to providing students with a critical and holistic education that centres the sociocultural aspects of music. Fostering cultural knowledge, appreciation, and respect fundamentally constitutes an important component of world music courses, in addition to acquiring listening skills pertaining to the discernment of various music genres around the globe.[4]

An important element of our pedagogical approach moves beyond lecture or the simple relay of information to students and, instead, involves their active classroom engagement. In this context, lessons expand on the content itself and into critical thought on how and why people create music and the meaning that it provides in their lives. The need for such experiential teaching methods became even more significant at the start of the pandemic both in a humanistic sense—due to widespread social isolation and disconnection from previously constituted forms of social interaction—and in terms of communicating information about music and cultural practices themselves, which became harder due to asynchronous methods of online learning such as having students watch pre-recorded lectures. In such asynchronous learning formats, students are distanced from the professor and they are unable to ask clarifying questions, engage in guided music-making activities with the teacher as facilitator, and/or may be dealing with at-home distractions or caretaking needs during lessons. These circumstances make it particularly difficult for students of various learning styles to critically comprehend and apply the knowledge that they are supposed to have been learning in the classroom. As Luttrel et al. explain, "Dominant music education models too often focus on teaching what you use to make music with rather than how you make it or why, and as a result are dependent on privilege and access" (Luttrel et al. 2020, 27). Access to understanding music and its cultural underpinnings should not be limited by online learning. Experiential teaching methods help to mediate knowledge exchange between students, professors, and cultural experts in a manner that encourages social interaction and cultural understanding, despite barriers to cross-cultural communications during the pandemic era.

Although developing relationships and maintaining human connection through experiential learning are crucial during the Covid-19 era, there is a protruding lacuna regarding what this might look like in the college world music classroom and how

[4] Campbell and Lum (2019) have discussed the value of fostering culturally responsive relationships between music students and broader communities. The benefits of such education go beyond the classroom and into the future when students can engage with people of various backgrounds in culturally informed manners throughout their personal lives and careers.

collaborations with guest musicians might take form in online learning environments. Thus, educators lack the tools to effectively establish, support, and carry out such partnerships. Moreover, the rise of the pandemic necessitated technological responses that continue to hinder access to digital platforms such as those discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to pre-recorded lectures. This article addresses the need for accessible intercultural practices through an ethnographic centring of an online World Music Guest Artist Series (WMGAS). Offered through the Zoom platform over multiple academic terms during various stages of the pandemic, WMGAS was adapted to fit asynchronous, synchronous, hybrid, and in-person modalities.[5]

Ultimately, our work reflects support for students, teachers, and guest musicians as cultural mediators. In addition to providing musicians who have lost income due to performance cancellations and venue closures with honoraria, the series also helps them cultivate relationships with new audiences and potential future listeners. Furthermore, WMGAS creates a space within which they can continue their practice, share their craft, and have the value of their community cultural wealth affirmed.[6] Lastly, in the vein of the applied study's significance for tertiary music education in the era of Covid-19, this article's co-authorship exemplifies how academic professionals and performing artists can synthesize their expertise in publication. To this end, the trio members are also educators in the areas of music and language. As educators and musicians, each one of us recognizes the importance of playing, speaking, and writing alongside each other. The Maharajah Flamenco Trio (MFT) has taken part in the series each regular academic quarter since its inception, from Fall 2020 to the present, and is centralized as a case study throughout the remainder of the article. In addition to engaging with MFT's perspectives, we will discuss the design and benefits of the WMGAS from the lens of the world music survey students and the instructor.

METHOD, THEORY, & DESIGN

[5] In terms of modality, in-person courses meet face-to-face at regularly scheduled times; hybrid courses offer a mix of in-person and online instruction; and synchronous and asynchronous courses are fully online. Synchronous courses meet at regularly scheduled times through online communications platforms. Asynchronous courses do not typically meet and, instead, allow students to pace themselves as they engage with material which is posted regularly through online learning management systems.

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Before discussing the significance of the World Music Guest Artist Series (WMGAS) and MFT's role within this educational model, it is important to outline the methodologies and theories participants employed when creating the foundation for the series' design. This includes a practical description of the course and the WMGAS in addition to a theoretical examination of our approaches to intercultural education at large.

Survey of World Music Cultures & WMGAS

At Western Washington University (WWU), the first author's institution and the host of the guest series under analysis, the Survey of World Music Cultures course offers all undergraduate students an introductory survey of various music genres from around the globe. There are no prerequisites and the course is open to both majors and non-majors, although non-majors make up the bulk of enrollment and may use the course for credit towards their General University Requirement (GUR) in Comparative, Gender, and Multicultural Studies (CGM).[7] Maximum enrollment for this course is 150 students and consistently peaks at its cap. Students' majors vary widely, as do their experiences and prior knowledge of lesson topics. Furthermore, as is typical of large GUR courses, education levels diverge in that some students are in their first year while others are nearing graduation. In terms of the teaching modality, this course was offered in person prior to the pandemic, but has since shifted modalities multiple times to adapt to state and university health and safety mandates regarding appropriate responses to the various stages of the Covid-19 era.

Before the pandemic, world music students were exposed to live performance through WWU's Global Spice World Music Concert Series. The former instructor, Patrick Roulet, designed the series so that students could attend a public performance from one guest artist or group per quarter. Concert ticket sales and a minimal course registration fee of $10 per student—which accumulates in large classrooms—help to fund musicians' travel and honoraria. In addition to performing publicly, the artists offer private performances and workshops during scheduled class times on the week of their events.

The pandemic did indeed lead to the cancellation of touring and live performance opportunities for musicians. However, rather than remove the opportunity for students to engage with artists altogether, the Global Spice series was adapted into the WMGAS when classroom instruction transitioned to an online teaching modality. In the absence of funding travel, room, and board, this move enabled an increase in the

[7] In the case of CGM credit, there are two categories: A and B. The A category focuses on cultural studies that lie primarily outside of North America and/or Europe while the B block is primarily within these locations. Survey of World Music Cultures is an ACGM course.

number of guest artists per term and incorporated musicians from across the globe within various music genres. While the series initially sponsored one Global Spice musician or ensemble per quarter, it grew to incorporate roughly eight guest artists per term, including those who were unable to travel due to cost, family responsibilities, and other restrictions. Additionally, in the face of multiple canceled events and income loss, WMGAS musicians were supported with funds from the student registration fee allocation.

When the course was taught asynchronously in the earlier stages of the pandemic, students were offered extra credit for attending live recordings that took place at a variety of times on weekdays and weekends to ensure accessibility for learners with competing schedules and to allow flexibility for the guest artists. If students attended four live recordings, they could replace a project grade or two quiz grades, allowing for a more equitable course design in which they could have autonomy over their educational experience.[8] The recordings were incorporated directly into the curriculum and posted in the weekly modules on Canvas, the university's online learning management system, so that all students could learn from the guest artists regardless of whether or not they attended the live sessions.

This model continued with both the synchronous and hybrid versions of the course and has now transitioned to in-class sessions with the return of in-person instruction. The musicians simply stream into the classroom via Zoom. The instructor and Music Department recognize the importance of hosting live in-person performances in addition to these digital guest artist appearances. Therefore, the Global Spice World Music Series has resurfaced and now exists alongside the WMGAS. To accommodate this, there are roughly four or five guest artists per quarter, as opposed to eight. However, this lineup still allows learners ample opportunities to interface with cultural mediators and for both students and musicians to benefit from the WMGAS and the Global Spice series.

Intercultural Education in the Time of Covid-19

In addition to creating digital spaces for live performance, the WMGAS is designed to facilitate student engagement with the musicians' cultural perspectives. Therefore, the guest artist appearances go beyond exposing students to live performance by incorporating open interviews and a Q&A session. In this manner, students learn about the sociocultural significance of the music, and the artists can engage directly with

[8] There are multiple resources for educators seeking to create more equitable student experiences. A few that are particularly influential in how we think about student participation and assessment for this course and series are Inoue's assessment ecology framework (2015), Stiggins' work on student-involved assessment (2010), and Paris' contributions on culturally sustaining pedagogy (2012).

learners, effectively fostering intercultural dialogue. This form of collaboration is important during the Covid-19 era because it allows students to develop their more critical understanding of cultural perspectives and helps them to further their social skill sets in otherwise isolated circumstances.

The concept of intercultural education was central to the development of the WMGAS. While it is sometimes used interchangeably with cross-cultural studies, there are important differences. Cross-cultural studies primarily focus on comparing cultures and are often characterized within educational programs through highlighting the differences in societal behavior (Landis and Wasilewski 1999). Intercultural education, however, elicits a greater focus on the interaction and communication between diverse individuals, groups, and cultures.[9]

Intercultural exchange can facilitate collective engagement that is shared within and between the learners themselves. The learner-centred exchange in turn enables co-regulation and greater agency in what topics learners explore and engage in. Learning is thus not solely in the hands of the teacher but shared within and between all participants themselves (i.e., student, teacher, guests): a concept termed co-regulation. As Lantolf and Poehner explain, "co-regulation centres on the idea that learners themselves are in fact active in regulating mediated behavior, through both verbal and non-verbal means and in ways that might be quite explicit or much more implicit. In this way, the contingent nature of mediation reflects not merely a mediator's interpretation of learner behavior but also how the mediator is guided by the learner" (Lantolf and Poehner 2014: 158). This ultimately allows for greater responsiveness and internalization of diverse forms of interaction and expression (Lantolf et al. 2014). These skills contribute to an individual's ability to recognize and navigate various cultural landscapes, apply their understanding of diverse perspectives to real-life situations, and develop expertise as cultural mediators.

Music educator and ethnomusicologist Benjamin Phipps discusses the social benefits of learning about music in digital classrooms during the pandemic stating: "For music teaching, this poses a unique opportunity to make courses more relevant to our students and create improved social outcomes for music education" (Phipps 2021, 63). Music performance classes are often discussed in terms of building social skill sets among students, but music lecture courses can also afford learners these opportunities when the curriculum is designed effectively. Dawn Joseph and Lucy Lennox comment on this in their work on pandemic-era music education. "Teaching music in schools is not only about achieving outcomes set out in the music curriculum and about attaining high grades," they explain, "but also about building resilience, developing good social skills, knowing how to set goals and working collaboratively with others" (Joseph and Lenox 2021, 251). The value of intercultural learning and exchange extends beyond the

[9] For more on the theoretical underpinnings of intercultural education, see Gonzalez 2011.

classroom and is particularly important for students in navigating the cultural landscapes of their future lives and careers. Almost everyone will eventually find themselves in social or professional circumstances in which they must engage with people from backgrounds different from their own. The MFT experiences this when they engage in the WMGAS. Their music-making and dialogue lead to a rich intercultural exploration of the music and results in meaningful exchanges between the performers and students.

THE MAHARAJAH FLAMENCO TRIO & THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH WMGAS

Formed in Tallahassee, Florida, in 2011, the Maharajah Flamenco Trio (MFT) is a flamenco nuevo (new or 'modern' flamenco) ensemble whose mission is to deliver world-class music while engaging in intercultural dialogue with audiences. Prior to the pandemic, the trio performed concerts, taught masterclasses, guest lectured, and presented workshops (all in English and Spanish), further demonstrating the art of flamenco in universities throughout the United States. Education is fundamental to their practices, as each member is a professional educator. While the pandemic did not alter this pedagogical mission, it did present unique challenges to how they pursue their goals as educators and artists. These challenges are indeed familiar to other musicians in the Covid-19 era as the pandemic has had unprecedented consequences for the arts and artists around the globe.[10]

During early lockdown, MFT, like many other performing ensembles, was forced to respond nimbly and creatively. The cancellation of their performance calendar meant that opportunities to generate income through concerts and other appearances, and the subsequent sale of merchandise, had vanished, placing the ensemble in financial hardship. Although resources like Music COVID Relief indicated that various agencies recognized these hardships (Music COVID Relief 2020), it largely fell on the trio to find avenues to continue as career musicians, maintain a presence, and connect with new audiences. The earlier stages of the pandemic also affected their teaching duties, with each member having to move their courses fully online in the span of weeks. This pedagogical transition came to shape their technological understanding of live presentation for a streaming audience. Using this newly acquired knowledge base, they invested in equipment and expertise that enabled them to broadcast live concert performances in high fidelity from multiple internet platforms.

[10] For a small sampling of these challenges, see the following publications, which discuss performance cancellations, venue closures, and other artist hardships during these times: Americans for the Arts 2020; Rolling Stone 2020; Voss & Robinson 2021.

The reality of a global pandemic presented opportunities for the trio to perform for audiences with whom they would not have connected pre-Covid. During this time, they interfaced with societies across the country, international guitar festivals, and fans around the globe. Having attended their performances while studying musicology at Florida State University, Youngblood thought MFT's educational approach and multi-layered sound would strike the perfect chord for the WMGAS. This led to a conversation with bassist David Cobb in August 2020, and they began to brainstorm how such a partnership could work in the fall quarter. As the MFT's mission is to educate as well as to entertain, it was logical for them to collaborate with Youngblood to bring synchronously streamed performances, discussions, and lectures to virtual classrooms.

On October 31, 2020, MFT Zoomed in from guitarist Silviu Ciulei's home. Even on Zoom, the excitement was palpable as students danced along to the music and asked questions about the group's playing techniques and performance experiences. They responded with curiosity and enthusiasm to instrument demonstrations and exhibited greater engagement than when in the average Zoom class. During the interview and Q&A, the trio was able to address a range of relevant topics including the intersections of music and culture, the role of music in intercultural dialogue, and the differences and importance of honouring versus appropriating cultural practices. On an individual level, each musician's unique background provided for a further synthesis of musical styles and cultures, therefore broadening the field of discussion.

Guitarist and vocalist Silviu Ciulei, born in Romania, studied flamenco for years in Cadiz, Spain with *gitanos*—the originators of flamenco—but his background and formal training are in classical guitar performance. Percussionist Ramin Yazdanpanah, son of an Iranian father and Cuban mother, is trained in world percussion, intercultural education, and language pedagogies. Drawing upon his experience living in Spain, he showcases great familiarity with the sounds and culture of flamenco. Bassist David Cobb, raised in the southeastern US, is an ethnomusicologist and, therefore, studies musical practices within their cultural context. He has a western classical background but also plays fluently in various genres of American popular music and in flamenco.

MFT has continued to be a guest in the WMGAS and was also featured in the first Global Spice concert upon the series' return in Winter 2022 because of the symbiotic relationship they created with WWU, evidenced in positive responses from students in the world music courses. This continued partnership has allowed for the intercultural dialogue between Youngblood and MFT to broaden, leading to the expansion of existing world music curriculum and the development of lessons in other university courses. It is in no small part that this continued partnership has constituted the WMGAS as a permanent component of the world music course and has encouraged further interactions with guest scholars and culture bearers in other WWU music

history and culture-focused courses. After setting the precedent with this learning model, we maintain conversations about how MFT's collaboration can further benefit students in various contexts, on and off campus.

WMGAS BENEFITS & EFFECTIVENESS

Beyond the theoretical significance and practical design of the WMGAS, it is important to examine the effectiveness of this model. The collaborative and inclusive nature of the WMGAS supports learning through culturally synergistic activities, or a "mutual effort from all participants to learn about, understand, and appreciate others' cultures and their interpretations of learning and reciprocity to learn with and from others" (Jin and Cortazzi 2001, 211). These benefits are related to the learning outcomes of the course, department, college, and broader university curriculum. At the end of each quarter, students are provided with a qualitative survey and asked to share their thoughts about the course and to explain what they will take with them moving forward. The survey does not include any statements concerning the WMGAS but, on average, 53% of responses mention the series and several have also included commentary on MFT. As some of the student reflections included in this section reveal, the impact of WMGAS serves students beyond their single quarter of world music enrollment.

Intercultural Responsiveness & Cultural Synergy

Fostering intercultural responsiveness was a goal in the development of the WMGAS (see section on intercultural education). Student responses indicate that not only have they developed such responsiveness but that it also benefits them individually and as members of broader communities. Furthermore, this is evident in student interactions with the musicians during the live recordings, in their course projects, and in their reflexive survey answers.

For example, when asked how the course would influence their future relationship with music and/or culture, one student wrote:

> Having the opportunity to see performances and interviews with people from different music cultures is something that will continue influencing my relationship with music and culture moving forward. Having the first-hand experience to listen [to] and watch these performances, and talk to the artists, opened my eyes to so many things regarding this topic. The meaning that comes from music becomes so much more meaningful when you understand the context behind the music. With this

> experience, I believe that I will now yearn for that understanding behind all music.

As this student demonstrates, intercultural dialogue with guest artists had a direct effect on this learner's classroom experience that will continue to influence their relationship with music and its perceived significance moving forward. Remarking on course-related topics with which they would like to engage further in the future, another student spoke about the unique value of MFT's involvement in the series and the cultural value of exposure to various music genres, explaining, "I would also love to learn more about flamenco music. The performance by the Maharajah Flamenco Trio made me extremely interested in this style … This class has taught me to be more appreciative of different genres of music and the cultures that created them." Another student offers similar comments on MFT's role in the WMGAS, stating:

> I found learning more about the flamenco style and listening to the Maharajah Flamenco Trio was quite interesting because I have always been fascinated with the style of flamenco and how it changed and evolved over time. I really enjoyed all of our live performances—it really gave a deeper perspective [to] the course and a broader understanding of music.

Responses such as these make apparent the significance of the WMGAS and the value of MFT within the series. More importantly, they confirm that students are learning cultural responsiveness from their engagement with artists in the series. Through facilitating dialogue with an explicit focus on cultural responsiveness and exchange, teachers and students can mutually benefit from one another's experiences and cultural knowledge. Students in Survey of World Music Cultures do this as they interface with cultural mediators and with each other in the WMGAS.

The process of intercultural exchange through cultural synergy incorporates the understanding of diverse cultures of learning through greater awareness of meta-cognitive and meta-affective aspects of learning. For example, through MFT's discussion in the WMGAS on how flamenco has traditionally been taught and learned through engaging in familial and communal activities, as opposed to a conservatory-based approach, learners can reflect on how culture affects one's own and others' learning processes, expectations, and behaviors. As Jin and Cortazzi state, the goal of cultural synergy is to promote, "a respect for others and dignity for oneself, a sense of integrity about one's own participation in a range of cultures of learning, an aspiration for confirmation or enhancement of identity for both learners and teachers" (2001, 211). Such discussion and reflection on diverse cultures of learning can support efforts to promote more diverse and inclusive expressions of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Students reflect on the benefits of creating cultural synergistic relationships with guest artists in terms of their understanding of music, cultural mediators, and themselves. To this end, one student writes:

> This course has influenced my relationship with music by [instilling in me] a new desire to learn more about the individual artist and the history behind the genres of music I listen to on a day-to-day basis. I've never really put too much thought into music beyond where it may have started. However, through this course, I've learned that there's so much to be said about music and its cultural influences. I've started to feel [the] need to understand the history of the music I listen to more to fully appreciate and respect the hard work and beauty behind its cultural background.

This student's response indicates that the course and its components influenced their desire to learn more about music and to honour the musicians' perspectives and cultural values. However, even more significant is the implication that this lesson was not confined to the classroom but will continue to affect their experiences of listening and intercultural dialogue in the future.

The WMGAS further enriches student experiences and encourages intercultural responsiveness through a commitment to centring the voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian cultural mediators in the world music classroom. This is an important component of decolonizing the music classroom because it teaches them to honour various perspectives and the people that hold them.[11] As one student wrote,

> This course had a huge focus on the students getting to know the people behind the music. For me, one thing that I will take away is trying to understand the complex culture and lives of people, not just the art they produce. One large thing that I have learned this year is how to appreciate and not appropriate. Which seems to be the case for a lot of white society when we (me being white) are discovering a different cultural thing that we enjoy. Instead of just taking it and claiming it as our own, it is our job to get to know the people and culture behind it.

This student's remark not only underscores cultural responsiveness, but also highlights further complexity through their direct statement about valuing community cultural wealth, particularly for cultural mediators and guest artists that identify as musicians of colour. Comments like these demonstrate how fostering cultural responsiveness can lead to more equitable engagement with various cultures and their musical genres.

Curricula are often structured to examine cultures and music as products, undergirded in assumptions that they are static, rather than dynamic and ever-

[11] For more on both the need to decolonize music classrooms and methodologies for doing so, see: Chavannes & Ryan 2018; Urbach, 2019; Brown 2020; & Decolonizing the Music Room 2021.

changing. However, through the WMGAS pedagogical approach, students actively collaborate with cultural mediators, vitally shifting the lens to examine the creation of music and culture as a process that engages the lived experiences of individuals and collectives. Thus, this series takes a process-based approach and aids students in developing the tools to be more informed in their interactions both in and out of the classroom and, perhaps, more invested in the ways their present and future actions may affect the lived experiences of others. For more on a process-based approaches to understanding music and culture in educational contexts, we recommend engaging with Kaity Cassio Igari et al.'s "Let's Stand Together, Rep My Tribe Forever: Teaching Toward Equity through Collective Songwriting at the Yakama Nation Tribal School" (Cassio Igari et al. 2020). While the contexts of the educational project described in this article are quite different from the WMGAS, we find their focus on process-based learning and description of values therein to be incredibly informative and inspiring to our own pedagogical values and approaches. Further, this focus on the dynamic aspects of culture represents a broader theoretical orientation to and a deeper valuing of Indigenous cultural practices, which are often purposefully repressed, wholly unrecognized, and/or considered to be rooted in the past and therefore not presently relevant by dominant groups. This lack of focusing on traditions, such as music, as lived processes constitutes a form of cultural genocide and should be considered carefully when planning and programming lessons about cultural music traditions in the classroom.

Fostering Musical and Interdisciplinary Skillsets

The Survey of World Music Cultures course also strives to provide students with skillsets through projects and learning modules devoted to learning about and experimenting with the practices of ethnomusicologists. In many cases, this means engaging in cross-cultural communications, for which the WMGAS is well suited. In the discipline of ethnomusicology, we research, talk, write, and teach about music, but we are not always engaged in the process of actively creating and listening to music. This detrimental decentring of music in ethnomusicological studies, what colleagues have sometimes flippantly referred to as eth**nomusic**ology, can pull students away from the heart of music-making and listening by teaching them *about* a given music practice, rather than connecting them to the musicians *with whom* they are learning. Such connections allow them to engage in processes surrounding musical listening and creation. An assessment component of the world music course is the Musicultural Interview Project, in which students are asked to interview someone about their musical and cultural background and experiences. The WMGAS supports students in developing their interview skills by allowing them to participate in multiple guest artist

interviews and Q&As before they conduct an entire interview on their own near the end of the term. Not only can the lessons that they learn through this project assist them in developing intercultural communication skills that can be applied to a variety of career paths, but the one-on-one design also allows them to reflect on the meaning of music with their interviewee in an even more intimate manner than in the WMGAS. Concurrently, students are encouraged to model their project design after the previously experienced guest artists interviews.

Finally, another observable benefit is the inspiration students receive to return to music-making or to engage with a new instrument or genre for the first time. While the Survey of World Music Cultures course primarily consists of non-majors, numerous students are drawn to it because of their interest in music and/or their background as musicians. For many students, observing and interacting with guest artists invited them to reflect on their own journeys and deepen their relationships with music. As one student explained,

> One thing from this course that will influence my relationship with music was the guest artist presentations. Watching each guest artist play their instrument and explain how it has helped them through the pandemic really stuck with me. I got to hear people play different instruments and explain their attachment to [them]. I have always wanted to play an instrument but have never put my mind to it. Watching the guest musicians play and enjoy their instruments has inspired me to get started. Moving forward (this summer) my goal is to start playing guitar! I think that this would strengthen my relationship with music and also help with healing aspects [that can be gained from playing it].

Another student remarked on learning about flamenco nuevo through the guest artist performance with MFT. As a dancer, they first explain their cursory knowledge of the genre and then go on to discuss how the guest artist performance inspires them to engage in more musicking of this style in their next step as a language educator:

> [Flamenco] is a dance between the musicians and the dancer, and I find that very fascinating, powerful, and romantic. I [am also] learning guitar and have been falling in love with the flamenco style of guitar. I will be teaching English in Madrid for 9 months starting this September, so I plan to pick up a classical Spanish guitar and learn as much as I can while I am abroad and immersed in the culture. I'd also like to note how inspired I was by the guest concert/interview with the Maharajah Flamenco Trio! They are a new favorite band of mine now.

Beyond displaying a genuine interest in learning flamenco music, this student can translate their skills as a cultural mediator in their language classrooms, using a music

genre with which many of their students will be familiar to build connections and create further intercultural dialogue.

WMGAS Musician-Specific Benefits

While intercultural education and responsiveness, cultural synergy, and music engagement provide benefits to students, musicians, and members of the broader community, there are also advantages to the WMGAS that apply more acutely to the musicians. In addition to the financial support that was discussed earlier in the article, guest artists can share their musical and life experiences with an engaged and culturally aware audience. This allows them to reflect further on the meaning and value of their work in connection with broader ideas that are covered in the world music curriculum, such as heritage and identity. Some musicians have also gained followers in their online communities as students have enthusiastically responded to their classroom appearances. One student explained in their end-of-course survey:

> I would also say that this course has made me more open to listen[ing] and learn[ing] more about music from other cultures. For example, the music produced by the Maharajah Flamenco Trio was my favorite performance from this class and I enjoyed the music they performed so much that I followed them on Spotify to continue listening to their music.

Musicians' collaborations with educational institutions allow students direct access to the artists. This project creates a space for socialization and personal interaction between the students and the artists, which serves to offset the increased isolation that many people have faced during quarantine. In this way, music fulfills the basic human need for social interactions. Thus, projects such as this enable both musicians and audiences to feel that they are part of something larger than themselves.[12]

Performance is the primary way that the trio interacts socially with their audiences. MFT's virtual performances have resulted in changes in the ways they perform and, to some degree, the social energy they are able to generate through audience/performer exchanges. Such exchanges are an intrinsic component of in-person shows and provide an immediate feedback loop to the artists through audience participation such as clapping, dancing, or through less active participation such as facial expressions. The Zoom streaming platform which is used in WMGAS permits the trio to see the audience, making the event more intimate than it would have been on other streaming platforms in which the audience is virtually silent and almost invisible, such as Facebook Live. This two-way synchronous streaming makes performances feel more

[12] To learn how this sense of flow and connection might be particularly applied to music classrooms, see Bernard 2009.

authentic and fuels MFT's enthusiasm, ultimately allowing them to provide a more energized performance for the world music students.

Finally, these collaborations also offer potential opportunities for musicians to widen their professional networks. While education has always been a cornerstone of MFT's involvement in the musical world, the WMGAS has furthered their opportunities for intercultural collaboration in university settings. MFT's initial involvement in WMGAS led to the co-authoring of this article, their Global Spice performance at WWU in Winter 2022, and guest appearances at two other universities. This is important for musicians that are often underrepresented and underfunded, especially under the dire circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION: REFLECTIONS, MEASURES OF SUCCESS, & FUTURE POTENTIALS

The professor and the members of MFT have co-authored this article in recognition of the value and importance of sharing first-hand accounts from cultural mediators. In that most of this article has been written from their collective perspectives, we would now like to shed further light on how such a series can meet the individual and professional goals of musicians and professors, in addition to offering personal reflections on measures of success of the WMGAS. To aid in doing so, the authors engaged in a dialogue about their experiences and each one wrote a brief response. We share these responses in this conclusion as a means of highlighting the importance of equitable participation between scholars and musicians and to provide less filtered and more intimate thoughts on the WMGAS from our individual perspectives.

Ramin Yazdanpanah: In the context of the WMGAS, success for me is measured in the opportunity to collaborate with my bandmates as well as extend our collaboration with other professionals who are as equally passionate about education. Through this process, we expand our understanding of ourselves, each other, and the world around us. These collaborations between the trio, Youngblood, and the students have been tremendously rewarding experiences that we are continuing to hone. These events motivate us to reflect more deeply on our understanding of the music that we play, the contexts and cultures that the music and instruments are embedded in, and the need for sharing our perspectives and experiences with others to engage in synergetic exchanges.

Silviu Ciulei: This collaboration has allowed us to continue to grow, this time in a new way, a way that lets us be even more academically specific and creative within the art form we work to craft. In this musical journey we take the listener through, a new perspective has emerged that propels us to better communicate with our audiences,

one that, in these unprecedented times, brings us closer together in experiencing the art, music and culture of Spain, America, and the world. The relevant subjects and discussions Youngblood picks for the class as well as the detailed questions asked of us prior to/after our performances in class show us the real depth of knowledge we have as performers and culture bearers and the rapport we are able to build with audiences through our interactions.

David Cobb: As a performance ensemble, we possess a heightened sensitivity to the mood and energy of our audiences. Deprivation from the critical synergy between listener and musician can easily result in dispassionate playing. We can offset this by playing for each other; however, the ability to interact with an audience in real-time gives us a psychological and emotional lift that brings with it a higher expression of the music. Feeling that synergy in the WMGAS increased not only our ability to perform, but our effectiveness at creating intercultural dialogue as cultural mediators. We saw the students open up to us and invite us into their lives in a moving way.

Felicia Youngblood: As a professor, I often measure success by student growth and the evidence of their internalization of course objectives in a manner that is both educational and meaningful to them on their individual journeys. On a more personal level—though I predict this perspective will resonate with many musicians and educators—these chances to interface with my students and cultural mediators are a reminder of the value of relationships, co-creation, and joy that have been less accessible during the isolation of the pandemic. As a lifelong learner, I leave each session feeling excited and more enlightened, even in subsequent performance-interviews with returning musicians. The pieces of wisdom gained from our interactions are then infused into my lectures and research in a manner that keeps things fresh and interesting for me and my students.

The reflections from each author indicate that the WMGAS holds meaning for them beyond the schedule of events around which the series revolves. The series has provided us with fruitful opportunities for intercultural dialogue and personal reflection. We look forward to its evolution as we continue to adapt it to fit the needs of students and guest artists.

While we have outlined many benefits of the WMGAS, we realise that no model is perfect and there are some potential drawbacks to the series. The cost of honoraria can be prohibitive to certain institutions and smaller and/or private colleges. As it stands, WMGAS funding is dependent upon enrollment, which can change with societal circumstances, especially in relation to pandemic-based personal and education challenges and desires. Nonetheless, the cost of virtual performances is marginal in comparison and creates a broader space in which these exchanges can occur while providing greater opportunities for artists' positive impacts.

Additionally, while we are grateful for these digital collaborations, we want to stress that live performance and face-to-face interactions with cultural mediators are still crucial to musicians and students alike. By no means do we intend the WMGAS to completely replace in-person collaborations with musicians beyond the era of fully remote instruction. We also recognize that it may become more financially difficult to support a hybrid model of in-person and digital guest appearances with the returning costs of travel expenses and honoraria for visiting artists. Additionally, there are some institutions and communities that do not have the resources to provide such workshops or attach even minimal course fees to student enrollment.

For those communities without the means to provide a stipend or host both online and in-person guests, a collaboration with arts education organizations or other campus offices could help fill the financial gap. This would ensure access for students, increase community relations, and provide often underfunded musicians with the means to take advantage of such opportunities. We also recommend hosting local artists when available and engaging online with musicians that offer perspectives that are less accessible to the surrounding community. This is the model towards which the WMGAS has transitioned during its 2022-2023 academic year.

Whatever form future series such as the WMGAS might take, the benefits far outweigh the costs. From increasing intercultural sensitivity, responsiveness, and cultural synergy to providing musicians with a community of avid listeners and financial support, programs such as these stand to benefit all stakeholders. While we are not grateful for the challenges and loss of life the Covid-19 pandemic has brought, we appreciate that the transition to online teaching and performance encouraged us to find new ways to collaborate and support each other during such difficult times. We hope that we have offered a clearer model of how to undertake these kinds of projects, but also understand that this topic is timely and that shifting circumstances will inspire further transformations of the WMGAS model in the future. We encourage interested educators to contact us with questions about the particulars of the series that were not included in the article due to space constraints. As participants have expressed, the WMGAS has cultivated intercultural dialogue that has facilitated long-lasting impacts that students and musicians can apply in their personal relationships and professional careers. These opportunities for synergetic exchanges foster personal and professional growth that continues to resonate throughout the lives of both the students and authors.

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Crossing an Impossible Threshold: Creating a Transdisciplinary Process in the Heart of the Pandemic

NICOLE SCHAFENACKER, LÉDA DAVIES

Abstract: In this article we, both playwright and performer, look at the play *Fish at the Bottom of the Sea* and its unique exploratory process. We articulate an exchange between circus, sound, and theatre, and examine the larger understanding evoked by an experiential point of view rather than one attached to the identity of any particular discipline. The article alternates between our two voices and includes videos and excerpts from the play to capture the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of our project. Our co-writing approach mirrors our collaborative and interdisciplinary process. As this iteration of the play was generated during the pandemic, the article explores how the play's themes of isolation and loss are reflected in our collective experience and our need for connection. Further, we explore how both the form and content of this work was impacted by the pandemic. Our paper is organized around three central themes: exploring liminal space and the desire to cross an impossible threshold; embodying states of matter and moving through stages of grief; seeking virtuosity in performance.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, pandemic, eco-theatre, liminality, theatre, circus, devised creation, physicality, performance, new collaboratives, affect, loss, grief, death, self, isolation, new mediums, approaches

Fish at the Bottom of the Sea (*Fish*, for short) is a play about grief – its intimacies and intricacies. The project, which includes the disciplines of theatre, sound, and aerial circus, explores individual loss through an inherently collective means – live performance. This project was birthed in 2020, the year the world changed dramatically, and carries its mark. Over the last two years, the project saw different iterations in anticipation of a live production that was postponed multiple times due to enforced closures related to the global pandemic. Through two rehearsal processes and one residency, our conception of the play, *Fish*, has expanded not only into an extended interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary process but has become a container and a mirror of sorts to realities faced by many during the health crisis.[1]

[1] These terms have been paraphrased from an in-depth analysis by Basarab Nicolescu (2014) in "Methodology of Transdisciplinary." Nicolescu's definition of transdisciplinary is inspired by *Jean*

Told through a plurality of voices, our project, *Fish,* integrates text, sound, and aerial circus into a cohesive artform, equally favouring each medium's nature, impact, and intention. The project's unfolding, exploratory manner straddles the tension between structure and creative possibility. This is achieved through a lens that is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, meaning that the project is looking at the transfer of knowledge between the artistic forms of theatre, sound, and aerial circus, as well as the larger understanding evoked through an experiential point of view: a search of knowledge, rather than a point of view attached to the identity of any particular discipline. To embrace the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of our project, this paper has a hybrid form. We alternate between the voices of playwright and performer, use digital content to capture the choreography, as well as include excerpts from the play itself. This type of writing also reflects the collaborative framework of the project.

Prior to beginning the project, we had several conversations regarding our roles and responsibilities. We agreed we wanted the creation process to subvert the traditional hierarchy of the rehearsal room, which usually places the director at the top of the decision-making pyramid. Instead, we built our roles based on trust, listening to (and hearing) each other, and on our own individual strengths. This collaborative way of working is by no means new. In "A Dramaturgy of the Body," Christel Stalpaert (2009) outlines several artists and companies who have opened up their processes and performances beyond the theory and practice divide, which, she argues, traditionally identifies roles such as that of the dramaturg as belonging to a "theoretical outsider" (121). These outside eyes could also be those of the director, the movement director, or the choreographer. Stalpaert lists Needcompany, Meg Stewart, and Jan Lauwers, among others, as artists who have opened up their creative process and challenged the division of roles in the rehearsal process. The sharing of intellectual responsibility in the devising process for *Fish* takes into account our individual expertise, while also allowing us to learn from each other's perspectives. We envision this article as a continuation of that process and aim to engage with this text in the same way we engaged physically with the work, by weaving between body, voice, and text. As such there will be times when Nicole will be speaking from her expertise as the playwright and dramaturge, while Léda will be speaking as the performer and choreographer. For ease of transitioning between these voices we have placed these sections in italics. We will use "we" throughout this article when describing the devising process, as it was a shared experience. Again, our intention

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Piaget, who introduced the term in 1972, saying: "Finally, we hope to see succeeding to the stage of interdisciplinary relations a superior stage, which should be "transdisciplinary," i.e. which will not be limited to recognize the interactions and or reciprocities between the specialized researches, but which will locate these links inside a total system without stable boundaries between the disciplines" (Piaget 1972, 144. qtd. in Nicolescu).

with this choice is not to remove clarity of voice or authorship, but to continue to support the decentralization of this project and its process.

PANDEMIC AS CONTAINER

Our process shares a unique context with many creative works paused over the last two years: the fragility of the human body became central in both creative works and processes around the world. The pandemic reinforced our understanding of what a live performance can be and why it is essential in our communities. However, at a time when coming together as a community felt most essential, it was not possible to congregate, and artists' creative processes necessarily shifted to accommodate rapidly changing conditions. Projects created over the last two years occupy a unique historical space as the work being developed was constantly fluctuating to meet the parameters of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. We will explore how both the form and content of this work was impacted by the experience of the pandemic and the restrictions that were in place. In a way, these restrictions became a container for our work. Although the creation during the pandemic is not the central focus of this article, it has nevertheless become an intrinsic component within the multiple layers of this creative process and is a necessary thread woven through the fabric of this paper.

First, we will share the specifics of how our process was shaped by these circumstances. Then, we will briefly address how these circumstances relate to the broader context in which we are making art, namely late-stage capitalism and climate change. The pandemic is deeply related to this context as globalization has compounded the reach of transmissible viruses such a Covid-19. As such, we will briefly consider how live art in North America is responding to the times we live in, and ground this work in the wider field we occupy as artists. Following this, we will discuss our approach to interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, as well as present the text of the play and the staging of the performance. The paper will then explore three guiding principles that have acted as north stars for our creative process: 1.0 Exploring liminal space and the desire to cross an impossible threshold; 2.0 Embodying states of matter and moving through stages of grief; 3.0 Seeking virtuosity in performance.

Our collaborative process began in January 2020 in Edmonton, AB, a few months before Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic and the social distancing protocols and closures of theatres forced us to place the creation and development of this project on hold. There were many stops and starts along the way, and moments where we had to adjust our plans. For example, this project began with another performer, Samara von Rad, with Léda acting solely as the choreographer; however, due to social distancing protocols and closures Léda stepped into the role of performer. We

were then forced to pause the project multiple times due to bans on public gatherings and the closures of theatres and rehearsal spaces. We resumed work on the project in late March of 2021 through a residency opportunity at cSPACE, in Calgary, AB. At the end of this residency, in May 2021, we took our performance of *Fish* outdoors, allowing us to complete our residency and accommodate last minute restrictions such as building closures. Although we were able to complete our work on the project, hopes of presenting *Fish* to a public audience were dashed when a second wave of Covid-19 caused closures and social distancing protocols to be put back in place. As we write this article, we are hopeful to finally share *Fish* with a live audience at the Alberta Circus Arts Festival in Edmonton, in June 2022.

We believe presenting the play in the summer of 2022 will be charged with a different quality of knowing (and feeling) compared to how it would have been received pre-pandemic. Our perception and the way we, as a society, engage with each other is shifting as we collectively move into an age defined by the tipping point of capitalism and climate change as well as the resiliencies these times evoke.[2] As mentioned, the pandemic inherently relates to this context as the reach of transmissible viruses has been compounded by globalization. As society meets these unprecedented changes, art necessarily fosters emergent forms of knowledge in response. Artists are more intently focused on creating equitable spaces to hold the complexity of our current world and build community as we face multiple crises. Transdisciplinary practices, as well as efforts to decentralize knowledge and leadership in creative spaces, are gaining traction. Our perception simply of gathering together in physical space has shifted as well: Many of us possess a deeper awareness of the very air we share and of the vulnerability of our bodies to the exchange of a virus. At the same time, in the absence of being around others, we may have become more attuned to how our biology and the health of our nervous system depends on this shared witnessing and being in relation to one another. Further, we may be more attuned to the knowledge that by being in the presence of others, we are impacted on a molecular, physical level and are thus inseparably interconnected. The semiotics of how we navigate our world and what it means to be close to other bodies in space has changed dramatically for many over the course of bringing the project to fruition. Through the lens of the world-altering event of the pandemic and the months of isolation that have characterized the last two years, what it means to attend a live art event, or even simply witnessing a body performing onstage have taken on new meaning.

[2] Eco-theatre artist and theorist Una Chaudhuri has coined the term "fifth wall dramaturgy" to speak about new work that responds to the unprecedented ways climate change is shaping us (Chaudhuri 2016). She speaks about the theatre's capacity to ground the audience at the scale of body and voice while engaging content that pushes the limits of what we can grasp – ie. irrevocable planetary change. Chaudhuri also hints at the phenomenological and felt awareness of the atmosphere that we share; an atmosphere that exists beyond language, culture, gender, class (etc.) and instead is characterized by the very physiological space we occupy on the level of air and molecular exchange.

Before we further explore our creative approach and the pandemic's imprint on this work, we first wish to situate you, the reader, within our approach to interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity through the text of the play as well as the staging of the performance.

THE PLAY: TRACING INTIMATE GEOGRAPHIES

The poetic, and uniquely structured text of *Fish* tells the story of a woman, Eve, who is grieving the loss of her lover after a fatal car accident. It is an internal investigation of the character making peace with her loss. Outwardly, the character is making her way through the streets of Edmonton seeking a place to create a burial ritual for her lost love. The play challenges the traditional dramatic form, as the main action derives from Eve's inner wrestling with grief, desire, and death. Eve seeks to orient herself in the world anew. She is suspended in time, cycling through memory and experiencing the present moment as both infinite and static. Her desires are no longer compatible with the time and space she once knew. Therefore, she must reconstruct the rules of her world.

I wrote Fish over ten years ago in 2007 when grief altered my orientation to myself and the world around me. Though the event itself was an ordinary one (the loss of a relationship) it opened up a channel for me to a much broader human grief. The experience brought me closer to an unavoidable truth: that living requires confronting not only the loss of others but the loss of who we are at different times in our lives. Death (whether literal, or through change) demands that each of us reckon with it in our way. The action of the play is about charting a path through this human grief to another place (rather than to 'the other side) and is about being curious where we end up. The desire to chart a path through the unknown is also reflected in the content of the play. Although new narratives are being told, in North America we are still steeped in centuries of images and stories of women as seen through romanticized, sexualized and maternalized lens,' and often from the male gaze. I wanted to tell a story from a woman's perspective that begins with the end of a romantic relationship and that launches from a place of encountering one's self anew after a life-altering event.

The play is a stream of consciousness style, one-woman narrative that forms through Eve's weaving together of memory, secrets, and dreams. The text, this self-made ritual, traces geographies throughout Edmonton that are imbued with Eve's daily life and memories with her lost love: the High Level bridge, the corner of 109 Street and Jasper Avenue near the Save on Foods, the old Shoppers Drug Mart building on the corner of 109th Street and 82 Avenue. Her journey is made of this memory-driven time. It could take place over twenty minutes spent walking the High Level

bridge as the light sets over the river valley, or years spent tracing daily pathways. Eve could be physically charting these paths or mapping them from memory from her apartment. The text takes on a spiral structure, spinning up and down, gathering momentum towards an exit point from the river of grief. The writing is expansive and imagistic. It intentionally leaves space for multiple staging possibilities. For instance, a key moment in Eve's letting go of her past takes place as she crosses the High Level bridge and says goodbye to her love through a fantastical memory:

> We come to the bridge,
> as we often have,
> and we stop in the centre,
> as we often do,
> and we look
> down down down
> into the dark water
> glistening with moonlight
> and you take my hand,
> as you often have,
> and for a moment
> I think we are going to run and jump together,
> release our bodies to the night,
> but instead we land softly
> in the folds of your sheets.
> (Schafenacker 2021, 19-20)

Eve seeks to make sense of her new reality and to find peace in this new terrain. Much of the dramatic tension of the play occurs through Eve seeking a connection to her lost love that negates the physical confines of her body on this earthly plane. However, the core action of the play transcends the loss of the relationship and becomes about Eve's journey of confronting death itself in order to chart a path into new life.

Prior to this particular collaboration, *Fish* had several productions as a play, all of which were directed by Elizabeth Hobbs. This is the first time it has been adapted for an aerial circus. Yet, in all iterations of the play the physicality and sound design have played vital roles in bringing forward Eve's process of letting go as she navigates the puzzle of her grief and searches for a way to surface above the grip of "all that is left unsaid, undone" that pulls her under (ibid., 23). This article speaks to the most recent adaptation which also includes an extensive sound design and the use of an aerial bungee apparatus, both of which respond to, and work in concert with, the play text's cyclical and poetic form.

In this current iteration of the play Eve's internal struggle to stay afloat in the undertow of grief took on new layers of meaning. As collaborators we navigated months on end in isolation. Our own individual experiences of loss and grief through the pandemic significantly informed the way we worked. With the project on hold, we stayed afloat in dialogue about the play through the pensive suspension of virtual space (Zoom). Through these conversations we found that the influence of the pandemic registered with the intimate and sensitive qualities of the play: coming intimately in contact with death and the loss of her lover reveals a different kind of intimacy between Eve and the world. This in turn resonated with our own personal senses of the fragility of relationships, and the social ecosystems that make up our world, as artists seeking to create work through this time.

1.0 EXPLORING LIMINAL SPACE AND THE DESIRE TO CROSS AN IMPOSSIBLE THRESHOLD

The process of creating a dialogue between text, sound, and the aerial apparatus allowed us to go beyond the forms of circus and theatre and create a piece that oscillated between these boundaries and their aesthetic modes of communication. We came to see this process as a liminal space in its own right. Our process embodied the territory of the unknown. We asked: How can we communicate in the space between defined disciplines? How can the mediums of text, sound design and aerial performance relate and respond to one another? To help chart the complex territory of combining multiple storytelling languages together from a performance perspective, Elizabeth offered the spine of Eve's journey as a desire to cross an impossible threshold (Clurman 1974). This helped us to ground the poetic nature of the work into playable action.

The dynamic quality of crossing an impossible threshold was embodied through Léda's engagement with the aerial apparatus itself which consisted of a series of bungee cords tied in loops of two different lengths, attached to a swivel and hung 13 feet in the air from a larger metal frame known as an aerial rig. Our process of staging the play delved into this liminal space somatically through an investigation of the body's reaction to this aerial bungee apparatus. The relationship between the performer and the aerial apparatus created another language with which to enact Eve's journey through the murky waters of grief. It allowed us to tell the story not only through text, but also sound and physicality inherently related to the play's narrative.

The play itself begins in this liminal space. In her opening monologue to the audience, Eve says:

> I'm standing on the corner of this and that…

I'm waiting to find a job,
waiting to hear the next song on the radio,
waiting for the right haircut,
the right outfit,
the right party,
the right people,
waiting for my next cigarette break.
Waiting to love,
to live,
to die,
to meet you.
Again.
(Schafenacker 2021, 3)

The staging of the opening scene feels emblematic of how we worked from different artistic languages to meet and create this new inter and transdisciplinary form of Fish. In the original stage directions Eve enters with a bouquet of flowers that she proceeds to destroy. She says, "I bought these flowers to put on your grave but moments after putting them there I decided to smash the shit out of them instead" (ibid., 4) *Several key dramaturgical questions presented themselves as we shifted from the original theatrical opening image of Eve smashing the flowers on the grave of her lover to the aerial form.*

The first image of the performer and the aerial apparatus set up the semiotic systems in the world of the play (watch The Screaming Goats Collective, "Thresholds," 1:53). *Because we had been working in a way that established the aerial apparatus as being akin to the memory of her lover it seemed that Eve should always be in contact with the apparatus, and that she would enter with it as she is already bound by this memory. We sought to capture this same quality of exploding tension and release without the prop of the flowers and instead through engaging the aerial apparatus. We discovered a way to do this was by Léda entering tightly bound by the apparatus. Rather than smashing flowers Léda struggles with the tangle of the bungees wrapped around her, seeking to free herself from their grip. This task achieved the same visceral quality that had been evoked by smashing the flowers and added a new layer of meaning by defining Eve's relationship to the apparatus as being akin to her lost lover.*

A key question we asked ourselves in this opening scene was, what is Eve's relationship to the audience? This was another space where theatrical and circus performance forms differ. In traditional theatre the actor might preserve the 'fourth wall' and not directly acknowledge the audience. In circus arts, the performer may acknowledge the audience directly to engage them in the drama of the feat. The circus

performer's act is usually punctuated with a "ta-da" moment at the end to assure the audience of their safety and to encourage a cathartic applause. We discovered that the moment Eve steps into the aerial rig punctuates her offer to the audience to witness her dive into the netherworld of her grief and her search for peace. This also became the moment when the sound entered into the performance space. Ashley Weckesser, our sound designer, made the exciting offer of taping contact microphones to the aerial rig so that the Léda's gesture of clipping the apparatus to the rig literally amplified this key moment through sound. These actions –the locking into the rig, and the resonance of its sound – made it clear dramaturgically that Eve's conscious choice to step into the 'mouth of the wolf' is what ignites the play. Eve makes a silent contract with the audience as she steps into the centre of the rig and locks in the apparatus she has untangled herself from. This action is the entry point into the netherworld between life and death in order to carve a pathway to the other side of this experience (watch The Screaming Goats Collective, "Aerial Bungee Apparatus," 1:39).

Throughout the performance Eve negotiates the liminal boundary between life and death, a threshold that once passed through cannot be crossed again. She also negotiates the mundane daily tasks it takes to live in the world, which often feel insurmountable in the face of grief and depression. She plays with twisting the words, "carve, crave" as a phrase she repeats, embodying her struggle between succumbing to the grip of loss (crave) or breaking new ground into life (carve). The aerial bungee is metonymically standing-in for this invisible border between life and death. As a membrane, or boundary between life and death, the aerial bungee connects Eve to the memory of her lost love. In turn, it becomes a container, and a force, that she must resist against in order to achieve acceptance of this loss. This is reflected in the elastic of the bungee itself. When we want to go up, we must push down (watch The Screaming Goats Collective, "Elasticity," 2:04).

The concept of crossing an impossible threshold is also reflected in the architecture of the aerial rig. Rather than hiding this structure from the audience's view we integrated it directly into the choreography. Not only is Eve constantly attached to the aerial bungee in some way, she can also push against, lean on, or reach for the metal frame of the aerial rig. This way the rig becomes another border that Eve must resist against, giving the impression that she is caged within the invisible parameter of her grief and the memory of her lost love. The audience adds to this border, acting as a line of witnesses to her container of transformation thus heightening her attempt to cross an impossible threshold through their presence.

There is a transformation in the body that occurs for me as the performer while being witnessed. The co-presence of the audience renders physical and vocal choices more significant and palpable. Fish is a solo performance, and yet there is an aspect of direct address in the text that implicates

the audience in the action and Eve's struggle. Isolation is often an intrinsic aspect of grief, yet the participation of the audience as witness creates an intimate exchange between performer and audience, which eventually helps Eve break through the trauma of her loss. When relating this back to the imprint of the global pandemic on the performance, the show's solo structure also speaks to the isolation many people felt during this time, while also confronting those feelings of isolation through the implication of the audience. Although the character of Eve is alone on stage (with the audience as implicated witnesses), I am not the only performer.

Aerial performance as a dynamic form relates directly to Eve's central desire of seeking to cross an impossible threshold. Circus artist Andréane Leclerc (pers. comm., Playwrights Workshop Montreal and En Piste, Montreal, Zoom, January 25 2021.) speaks about circus as embodying an inversion of cultural codes. The upside down body or the body spinning in space may allow us to enter into a different emotional terrain than we normally inhabit in our world of pedestrian movement. We are thrilled when gravity appears to be broken or the spine bends in a way that is seldom seen. Engaging the physics that act on our bodies in a daring way can widen our field of vision; it can illuminate corners of the human experience. The sensation of the world being flipped upside down, whether experiencing intimate grief or grief on a collective level, is deeply relatable for many. Through aerial performance the sensation of the upside-down world is literally embodied by the performer, allowing the audience to empathetically and viscerally enter into this inverted space.

The desire to cross an impossible threshold is embedded in the content and form of the play. It shapes the content in large and small ways: It is in the moments of indecision about minute details. It is in the threshold between knowing and unknowing; once knowledge is realized it cannot be unknown. The interplay between mediums allowed us as creators to explore multiple physical thresholds. What is the threshold between silence and being able to speak (to give voice to the unspeakable)? What is the threshold between our past, present, and future selves? Challenging and observing the thresholds that make up (perceived) reality became a way for Eve to enter into the generative space that may also be held within grief, "I cut through all that is left unsaid, undone" (Schafenacker 2021, 23) Part of her journey is discovering how to engage life anew while being in the midst of death.

2.0 EMBODYING STATES OF MATTER AND MOVING THROUGH STAGES OF GRIEF

In the play text, Eve has an inner desire to move forward yet struggles to move beyond her grief. In other words, Eve is presenting one 'state of being,' while holding

several other possible states within herself. Conceptualizing certain parts of the play according to these states of being, or matter, became a dramaturgical tool for us to track Eve's journey through the play, and further, it informed the choreography. These dynamic states of being, for our purposes, were akin to stages of grief and its multiple and at times contradictory expressions within the grieving body.

One of the key ideas for how states shaped our approach to movement comes from the work of choreographer Meg Stuart. In her interview with Jonathan Burrows (1998), Stuart confesses she does not like choreographing movement phrases, rather she prefers to create a "physical state… a task" on stage. Stuart describes states as "frequencies and temperatures," "a window into a different reality," "activity plus intention," and "oblique relations" (Stuart and Peeters 2010, 19-20). Stuart uses "States" as a way to inform her process by creating while dancing. She notes that trying to achieve a certain state allows her to connect more emotionally with her movement and to trust her experience, specifying, "it is not just the state that the person is in which interests me, but also their relationship to being in that state" (ibid., 19).

Stuart's description of "states" as physical and emotional, while also relating them to "frequencies and temperatures" (ibid., 19) not only reminded me of the stages of grief, but also states of matter. Fish contains a lot of water imagery, the body is also 60% water, and water is a form of matter. As the choreographer and performer, I became curious whether the different states of matter could be physicalized using Stuart's notion of "states," and be connected to the stages of grief somehow. In other words, could the increase in energy (i.e. temperature) and its effects on the frequency of the matter's movement, be similar to how a person's state of being, can affect the quality of their movement in performance? Could a body's speed, vibrations, pliability, and energy also change depending on the stages of grief it is experiencing? For example, in my personal experience I have noticed when someone who is grieving finds themselves in a state of depression they may isolate, hold firmly in place, or have difficulty motivating themselves into action. Broken down, the term depressed can even mean deep-rest.[3] *These movement qualities might resemble that of the solid-state of matter outlined in the image above. Contrarily, anger, another stage of grief, is sometimes perceived as volatile. When someone is angry their voice may become forceful and people who are enraged are described as "flying off the handle." This interpretation of anger could resemble the gaseous state of matter. When conceiving of how I might begin to approach scoring the movement and text, this notion of states of being and the stages of grief allowed me to take something abstract, such as death and grief, and give it form.*

[3] I come to this idea by Martha Nibley Beck (2001), who articulates the correlation between depression and grief saying: "Grief pushes us into 'deep rest', weighting down our muscles, wringing tears from our eyes and sobs from our guts" (Beck 2001, 183).

This sense of inhabiting a certain state is a core part of the play's textual imagery. There is a recurring image of Eve being underwater which underscores the state that evokes in her the viscous feeling of grief. Underwater, time is slowed or even non-existent. The body, too, is suspended and forced to slow. The body is free to fall, dive, glide, or swim. All movement occurs under the pressure of water acting on the body. Sound is distorted and reaches the ears in echoes and reverberations. There is no breath. Eve enters this watery state as a way of finding her own answers through grief several times throughout the play. Sometimes this state serves as a container, or an escape from reality:

> I'm in the bathtub, water running, water steaming, steam rising
> to form droplets on my skin,
> my body separated by that which is above and that which is below the surface
> just steam and skin and dark
> and I plan to lie here until I don't want to lie here anymore
> night or day
> silent now except for the running water
> and gentle lapping up against the tub
> that happens when my chest rises and falls,
> and time is going by the same way, lapping along,
> it's impossible to tell when I'm in the tub...
> (Schafenacker 2021, 6)

Conversely, Eve is challenged by the state of the fast-paced, bright external world and what it demands of her. Midway through the play she relives the death of her lover entering the hospital where, "the light is blinding and the walls are a dying yellow" (ibid., 10) and winds her way up and down stairs and through corridors to find his room. The state that the hospital evokes in her body is frenetic and full of sharp edges. Later, she goes on a nighttime walk to a 24 hour Shoppers Drug Mart where she "move[s] like a moth towards the backlit cherry-red sign, and flutter flutter flutter[s] through the automatic doors to meet aisles of shining white epoxy flooring laying themselves out... glinting and glittering under the panels of fluorescent lights" (ibid., 15). Likewise, the 24-hour drug store sets off a repetitive, yet stuck, state in Eve as she anxiously catalogues items from the Shoppers in the text. Confronting these worlds, the hospital and the 24-hour Shoppers, is jarring in contrast to the insulated and watery internal world Eve generally inhabits. The concept of states of matter, and their relationship to stages of grief, provide a language with which to understand and even extend the range and opposites that Eve embodies throughout the play in her grieving.

Another way we aimed to capture the states housing Eve's internal experience was through the sound design of the play. Sound is a particularly effective way of conveying the interiority of an experience and creating an atmosphere for it to live in. Working with a live sound design became a way to theatricalize Eve's experience of becoming undone by certain states, and measuring the shift from the expression one state to another. As the sound design was being performed, it became a means to respond to and underscore Eve's internal experience in real time. It also became a way of further engaging the aerial rig in the storytelling of *Fish*. Using contact mics to capture the friction or snapping of bungees, the resonance of a ground wire caught in the frequency of the sound channel, or the cables echoing in metal poles, created a sonic experience of being haunted. Further, Ashley began to explore working with a contact mic to pick up Léda's heartbeat. The interplay and tension between an organic sound (the human heartbeat) and inorganic sound (bungees and cables on metal) revealed another language to convey Eve's struggle to navigate the disorientation of grief. This element also created an opportunity for deep listening between Léda and Ashley as the qualities of sound and movement played off of one another in a dialogue that made Eve's internal struggle more visible.

The elasticity of the apparatus creates a *désequilibre*, an unbalance, in the body. This is a response to the body's constant (re)negotiation with gravity and the resistance, or lack thereof, provided by the elastics. In turn, this instability became the entry point for the development of the movement score. Another way to engage this idea of (in)stability in quality of movement is through the concept of *allostasis.* Noga Arikha (2019) defines *allostasis* as "the process that the organism engages in to achieve stability, the regulation of bodily states through change." In *Fish,* Eve is struggling to regulate her *allostasis*, and regain control amidst her grief. This struggle for control and balance, as well as the collision of movement and stasis, is present in both the aerial bungee and the body. In our process, we began to examine how the apparatus could become a container for the character Eve's grief; exploring how the body responds to the elastic structure of the aerial bungee, with a border that is both tangible and intangible, much like grief itself.

During our process a strong sensation would occur in my body once I stepped off the apparatus. After having worked on the apparatus for an extended period of time, I would often have to stand still or lie on the floor with my eyes closed because the sensation was so overwhelming. I was destabilized. While I stood or lay in stillness, I could feel the ground moving underneath me, as though I had been on a boat for a long time. My body was holding two states at once, she was both yielding to gravity, while also rising with levity. Despite my body's best efforts to find stability, the aerial bungee is an object that is constantly fluctuating between a fixed and unstable state.

This not only speaks to the body's ability to hold two opposing states at once, but it also is a testament to the body's adaptability. Just as the bungee's elasticity is resilient, so is the body.

Eve returns again and again to the feeling of being underwater in textual images that both submerge her in their wake, and later, begin to wash away her sense of being hopelessly adrift. As explored earlier in this section, this watery state creates a small reprieve for Eve to orient herself. Her submersion in the water eventually gives way to a small moment of clarity:

> I go back to the tub and sit under water for a long, long time
> my body above and below surface,
> and I realize that I am water surrounded by water, made of water,
> holding water,
> crying water,
> until I become light, I am light in the water,
> feeling the water around me, for the first time staying still,
> and I realize that even if there is nothing beyond there is something
> inside, there is something inside, fragile, breaking and beating.
> (Schafenacker 2021, 18)

The final bathtub scene mirrors the opening moment of the play when Eve chooses to step into the heart of her experience through the symbolism of locking the aerial apparatus to the rig and allowing herself to become suspended in air. Bit by bit, she feels herself immersed in the dimensions - the vital states of aliveness and being - that her encounter with death has opened. She goes into the centre of the deluge, as it slowly begins to loosen its hold on her.

3.0 CARRYING OUT VIRTUOSITY IN PERFORMANCE

Another way we broke from the conventional modes of creation in a circus or theatrical context was by attempting to define and embody the term virtuosity. We believed this to be an open-ended pursuit, not subjugated to the constricting movement-vocabulary typically associated with circus or theatre. Initially, we understood virtuosity to mean an extraordinary event, or a demonstration of a superior skill, but what did it mean for something to truly be extraordinary?

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) the term virtuosity dates back to 1443, deriving from the French term *virtuosité,* meaning moral goodness. To show virtue (ca. 1100), *vertu*, is to demonstrate power, and an act of virtue is defined as

resembling an act of divinity, a miracle, a wonder. Later, the term was translated into the Italian virtuoso (ca. 1500), which is a popular term still used today to describe "a person who demonstrates special skill, or knowledge". It was choreographer Jonathan Burrows' definition, however, that became our main inspiration when exploring this term.

In *A Choreographer's Handbook*, Burrows (2010, 89) describes virtuosity as follows:

> Virtuosity raises the stakes to a place where the audience knows something may go wrong. They enjoy watching this negotiation with disaster. Will the performer fall, or forget what they're doing, or will they get through it? The resulting anticipation, poised on the brink of success or failure, suspends time in a moment of in-breath. This slowed-down time, in the midst of risk, is as much of a pleasure for the performer as for the audience.

Burrows' definition, particularly the notion of "negotiation with disaster", insinuates a paradox of pleasure found in risk. The effect[4] of this on the viewer's perception of time has a strong bearing on the approach we employed. We could see how virtuosity might relate to circus disciplines, for example, a tightrope walker who is in constant negotiation with gravity and the suspension of time and the pleasure the audience experiences from watching her with uncertainty from below.

Yet, this definition also allowed us to imagine virtuosity more broadly. Imagine, for example, a glass cup filled with water on a table. The glass is accidentally knocked off the table, maybe bounces on the floor and then lands upright without spilling any of its contents. The person who witnesses the event freezes as the cup falls to the ground and holds their breath as it bounces on the ground without breaking or spilling its contents. There is no real technique involved here, since the glass falling was accidental, and there is no guarantee the performance could be repeated with the same results, yet it could be argued this performance[5] is virtuosic. In line with the OED's definition of virtuosity, this is a sensational moment in which the cup demonstrates a special dexterity. The moment also encapsulates what Burrows referred to as a moment "poised on the brink of success or failure" (2010, 76). This imaginary, yet plausible event, may leave the spectator feeling unsettled yet intrigued by the uncertainty of the outcome.

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[4] We turn to affect theory as examined in "The Affect Theory Reader" (Gregg, Seigworth, and Ahmed 2010) to explore how the emotional and visceral imprint of a performer's action on us as spectators contributes to our perception of, and how we create meaning about, a performance.

[5] In his introduction to *Performance Theory*, Schechner (2005) confesses that performance is a particularly challenging concept to define. Theatre is only one portion of a wide spectrum of events that could be viewed as performances. Some practitioners argue that "performance is a 'quality' that can occur in any situation rather than a fenced-off genre" (ibid., 22).

There is a feeling of *Angstlust*, a German term used to describe something that is both pleasurable and fearful, in that we are fearful the cup will break, yet we are exhilarated to discover it has remained intact with all of its liquid contained. Also, time seems to come to a standstill at the moment between the cup being knocked off the table and its landing on the floor unharmed. During this stretch of suspended time, we are completely present with the cup. We are not thinking about the moment before it was knocked over, nor are we reacting to the fall by trying to catch it.

In *Fish*, the tension in the processes we explore is the same. *Angstlust* occupies similar emotional territory as catharsis, a state that is foundational to the Western origins of theatre. In *Aristotle's Poetics* (Halliwell and Aristotle 1998, 200), catharsis allows the viewer to purge emotion while held in the ritual of theatre. The experience of being able to access emotion or states rarely available in day-to-day life can be said to be the lifeblood of why we go to the theatre. *Angstlust*, as evoked by virtuosity, is one means of creating the vital space shared by the performer and the audience. Rather than relying on the codes of theatre and circus, harnessing the work to a quest for virtuosity proposes an entry point that is based on inquisition and daring.

We engaged in the struggle to achieve an impossible, even virtuosic, task through a second compositional strategy inspired by the dancer and choreographer, Meg Stuart. Stuart's work has been described as speaking through concepts or situations, "she sets up little prisons," comments David Hernandez, "within which one must create" (Stuart and Peeters 2010, 17). These holding cells or movement structures are what Stuart calls "impossible tasks:"

> Often my choreographies are constructed from impossible tasks, such as the will to compress time, to rewrite one's history, to live in many bodies at once, to fully experience the pain of another, to embrace emptiness, to show all perspectives of a complex situation in a single gesture, the choreography reveals the determination, the failure and the vulnerability of the attempt at the same time. (ibid., 17)

By means of this "impossible task", Stuart is approaching choreography through the paradoxical experience of humanity. This, notes Burrows (2010) gives the impressions of a movement structure that is constantly falling apart .

In Fish, I applied Stuart's notion of "impossible task" to climbing the aerial bungee. The bungee apparatus was created with the intention that I would be able to climb the longer loops to access the short ones above. This modification of the apparatus would allow me not only to move horizontally across the floor but also to climb up the apparatus in a vertical motion. However, I had never worked on this particular aerial apparatus before, and I was unaware of its possibilities or limitations. Needless to say, once I began working with the bungee, I discovered that climbing

the elastic cords proved to be very difficult (watch The Screaming Goats Collective, "Impossible Task Rehearsal Fish 2021," 0:50).

Each time I would grab overhead and step on the loops, giving the apparatus my full weight, I would sink right down to the ground. No matter how much I pulled down, I made no progress; the task of climbing was impossible. With each climb, the apparatus stretched out more revealing the conviction, collapse, and precarity of the attempt to climb all at the same time. However, rather than avoiding, or trying to find a smoother way to climb the apparatus, I embraced the frustration of the climb and used it as an improvisational framework. As I engaged in the experience of climbing the bungee cords, I became present with all my sensations and developed a deeper connection with the apparatus.

The struggle to climb, and the need for support where there is none, directly relates to Eve's grief and her desire to reconnect with her lost lover: no matter how hard she tries she cannot bring him back to life. Stuart says, "This kind of disagreeing body could show language, could show that movement was not just design but could actually carry meaning" (Stuart and Peeters 2010, 16). Similarly, the act of trying to climb the aerial bungee carries the meaning of the text, as well as conveys Eve's interior struggle. The visceral quality of this task allows the audience to enter empathetically into the physical experience of grief: the deep persistence it requires, and the inability of words to sufficiently capture this sustained effort.

The embodied presence that trying to complete this task evokes also relates to the inter and transdisciplinary goals of the project. The impossible task asks the body to speak in ways the text cannot, revealing the body's unique movement quality, conveying the information of the text abstractly and sensorially (watch The Screaming Goats Collective, "Impossible Task Choreography Fish 2021," 0:37). In turn, this allowed us as collaborators to break free of the disciplinary boundaries of circus and theatre. Therefore, we concentrated on the dialogue between the body and the bungee, conveying the meaning and sensations underneath the surface and allowing new movement patterns to unfold.

There is virtuosity in navigating the high wire act of grief. From Eve's perspective, the threshold of remaining lost and silent in her experience, or instead, giving word to it, is charged with risk. While the virtuosity of aerial performance accesses spaces that the word cannot, the act of speaking and putting language to a primal experience such as grief remains a necessary vessel for carrying Eve through to the other side of her experience. Language engages the voice and the physical reverberations that resonate through the body when an experience is spoken aloud. The play spins repetitive language on its axis, building cadence and momentum through its delivery. In performance, the black bungees evoke the image of loops of ink forming words. When

Eve finally arrives at the point where she finds a small exit to her despair it takes the form of a ritual conveyed in part through the spoken word:

> I cut through all that is left unsaid, undone.
> I search for water,
> bare feet on black dirt,
> I step on cool ground in the moonlit night.
> Reflections in windows.
> I cast shadows across living room walls
> I bury what is left of us here.
> (Schafenacker 2021, 23)

Lastly, the role of the audience as witness is a central element to virtuosity. Harvard University's "Student Guide to Performance Studies" states that Performance Studies is not the study of behaviours as abstracted objects, rather behaviours "in relation to the individual or group that exhibits them" (Komitee n.d., 7). In this, the virtuosity of the cup falling to the ground and not breaking is a performance that is shaped by the audience that witnesses its fall. It is also these witnesses that determine the value of the performance by investing in the cup's potential disaster.

This is the same for me as a performer in Fish. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to perform this show to a live audience, those participating in the process, my collaborators, or even my video camera documenting my process, have become the witnesses that shaped my performance and therefore interpret it as virtuosic. My movement on the aerial bungee is still daring and skillful without a witness' co-presence, but there is no spectator held in the suspense of the unknown outcome of the event. Similarly, an actor reciting their lines alone in a rehearsal hall might deeply connect to their material and may strike a certain emotional chord in themselves. However, only when the actor can tap into that co-presence on stage with an audience (even if it is only an audience of one), is the magical space between performer and creator activated for a vital exchange to occur.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Taken together, these concepts of liminality, states of matter, and virtuosity have allowed us to carve out new space not only in our understanding of the content of the play but in our creative process as a whole. Creative risk and moving into the unknown is easy to talk about, yet hard to carry out in practice. Defining parameters that valued and were designed to engage uncertainty and the potentials of the unknown allowed us

to enter into vivid creative territory. By defining Eve's active objective, the 'spine' of the character, from the outset as the desire to cross an impossible threshold denies the possibility of a defined path towards an achievable outcome in Eve's narrative. Having an impossible desire and the very human hope of somehow reaching it opened up an oblique and expansive terrain that was full of life. The struggle of trying, of becoming derailed by minutia, or of being overwhelmed to the point of paralysis and the intimate knowing of failure, brought us into territory that revealed the human heart in a new way. Eve's narrative is somewhat contradictory to classical representations of theatre (the hero's journey) and to circus arts as spectacle-driven forms (mastery and perfection). We led with creative risk. We prioritized embodied knowledge over disciplinary boundaries and sought to discover what could be - and was - spectacular in the intimate languages of the body and voice whirling through the numbing, black waters of death to tell this story.

Arguably, the pandemic has shaped the form of theatre and the act of live performance unalterably. A radical reimagining of how and why we engage the live arts is taking place. We are living in a vital historic moment as we face climate change and global crises such as the pandemic. The cultural shifts taking place mirror the way new forms and approaches to art proliferated in response to the second World War. For instance, in the aftermath of WW2, new forms and genres that pointed to the frailty of the human body and the corruption of language emerged including Butoh dance in Japan and absurdism in the UK, Europe, and North America (Nellhaus 2016). Similarly, a radical re-approach to public art is gaining momentum in the aftermath of the pandemic. Particularly, a revival of democratic questions as to who can make art (challenging the exclusive nature of conservatory and university programs) and how it can be viewed (in public spaces, online, across time zones, for free) are once again underway. Stories that challenge the core of the narrative act – shaping random events into cohesive meaning – are upending traditional forms. How we have gone about the making (and non-making) of this project has undoubtedly been shaped by the unprecedented time we are living as a society, the new ground being broken in art-making discourse, and our changing somatic consciousness as a society.

The liminal space in which we are living and creating is rich with potential. It defies the linearity of time, holding past, present and future all at once. It is neither here, nor there. Inside it, you are simply a body suspended in space. For two years we have been collectively existing in a space that feels both isolated from the world, yet also deeply connected to it. At times, it seems impossible to move forward, yet behind us is only a memory of what once was. This liminal space is a paradox hinging on uncertainty. Further, we are living a sensational moment where we are each having to demonstrate our own special kind of virtuosic dexterity. Like the cup, or a performer on an aerial bungee apparatus, we are collectively "poised on the brink of success or failure"

(Burrows 2010, 89). We are living in two states at once, embodying a feeling of *Angstlust*; at times it may be pleasurable to be at home, and yet this can also be a fearful experience. Some days we find we are exhilarated simply to discover we have made it through another day with our minds and bodies intact, not unlike the cup which hasn't broken despite rolling off the table. Time has come to a standstill. We are in-between moments, no longer able to live in the way we once did, but uncertain what the future will hold. And yet, there is vital life in this not-knowing. As Eve says in the small-epiphany of the final underwater bathtub scene: "Even if there is nothing beyond, there is something inside, there is something inside, fragile, breaking and beating" (Schafenacker 2021, 21). During this stretch of suspended time, whether we want to be or not, we are compelled to remain completely present with our states of being in this moment, with reality as it is. As Eve discovers at the end of play, the bare-bones reality stripped of fantasy, ruminatory despair, and illusion - stripped of ideas of forgiveness, redemption, or neat and simple healing - contains agential wonder even if the truth of it is as dark as sea bottom:

> Sink.
> Sank.
> Sunk.
> I'm there.
> I'm here.
> I'm here with the slippery fish.
> The slippery fish
> who live at the bottom of the sea
> and do not understand the language
> of light
> or dark,
> just of what is.
> (ibid., 30)

Fish seeks out what is possible beyond the codes and borders of disciplinary language. Just as the explorations on the apparatus cause a collision of movement and stasis, present in both the aerial bungee and the body, the process of *Fish* is carried forward, past disciplinary boundaries, through both an outward trajectory, as well as an inward investigation of sensations and the unknown. It accepts that the body can hold multiple states at once and moves towards the liminal by creating impossible tasks where the body must struggle for control and balance. And, it suspends time through a "negotiation with disaster", since it is unclear if the bungee will support the performer, or fail to break their fall. The uncertainty of the future has created yet another layer of

virtuosity, revealing the determination, the failure and the vulnerability required each time we attempt to begin again.

The exploration of liminality, states of matter and virtuosity came to be embodied in our broader process as artists trying over two years to create a show across great distances, lapses of time and deeply shaking personal circumstances, a show that may never materialize. The poet and philosopher David Whyte writes about the aliveness of "being close", of "being almost there":

> Our human essence lies not in arrival, but in being almost there…Human beings do not find their essence through fulfillment or eventual arrival but by staying close to the way they like to travel, to the way they hold the conversation between the ground on which they stand and the horizon to which they go (2020, 18).

Like Eve we have been challenged to push up against the membrane of what we thought we knew, of where we thought we would arrive and when, and to allow new meaning and potentiality to emerge. As we tested our north star concepts against the limitations necessitated by the world we came to know these dramaturgical and choreographic concepts in a more expansive way than what we could have imagined at the start of the process.

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Eusebius and Florestan, Pierrot and Harlequin

ERIN JAMES

Abstract: This video and article are inspired by Robert Schumann's use of characterization in his music and writings, and the affinities of these sometimes kaleidoscopic and multiple musical and critical perspectives with theatre, fragmentary scenographies, and costume. Drawing on the traits of Schumann's own characters Florestan, Euesbius, Master Raro, as well as other personas such as Harlequin and Pierrot, I have aimed, in my audiovisual collage and performance of a hypothetical 4th movement to Schumann's 1851 Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in A minor (Op. 105), to create a mediation between disparate aspects of the music, envisioned as personality fragments scattered in the landscape of the piece. The video itself is a meditation on, and an outcome of the realities of the pandemic, and the isolation that intruded in such a sustained manner on my personal and professional life. The video is an impromptu assemblage of pre-pandemic footage and photography combined to create a collective virtual chamber music experience representing an internal world haunted by dissonant multiple characters. In some ways, I echo in performance certain suggestive strains of Schumann's own creative imagination and his personifications, both musically and in his critical writings, of the characters Florestan and Eusebius whom he sought to amalgamate in the figure of Master Raro.

Keywords: Robert Schumann, violin, piano, music, costume, mental health, pandemic, isolation, video, photography, psychology, psyche, collaboration, composition, internal, external

Watch the video: ***Eusebius and Florestan, Pierrot and Harlequin***.

In a 2021 article in The Guardian titled: "That way madness lies: why the obsession about diagnosing Robert Schumann?" the author, Phil Hebblethwaite, relates the troubling history of mental health in Schumann's family and the commonplaceness of the association between mental health and Schumann's musical works. He cites, for example, pianist and psychiatrist Dr. Richard Kogan, who, in 2015, went so far as to assert that Schumann's *Carnaval Op. 9* for solo piano "could not have been written by somebody who did not have bipolar disorder." Similarly, musicologists Peter and Lise Otswald, known for their work on music and psychiatry have found evidence in Schumann's own writing that he positively identified with multiple personalities in

himself (Otswald 2010, 40). The question is controversial, even if Schumann himself opened the dialogue associating his personal life with his work.

In both his literary and musical compositions, Schumann carefully constructed and drew on a cast of contrasting fictional characters that embodied multiple, sometimes fragmentary perspectives in his work (Daverio 1997, 127). In 1834 he became founder and editor of the journal *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and it was here that the imaginary personas of Florestan, Eusebius, and Master Raro, among others, offered musical commentary in line with their respective and antithetical personalities. Furthermore, Schumann featured these imagined characters as members of the *Davidsbündler* music society and represented them, as well as other historical and theatrical figures such as Pierrot and Harlequin, in his music. In particular, these characters predominate in piano works such as his *Davidsbündlertänze, Op. 6* and *Carnaval, Op. 9*.

In developing the characters of Florestan and Eusebius, Schumann clearly drew influence from Jean Paul's book, *Flegeljahre,* which presents the vastly different brothers Walt and Vult who represented a dualism that, according to Otswald, Schumann acknowledged in himself (Otswald 2010, 40). While Florestan represents the masculine, extroverted, dynamic, audacious, powerful, tempestuous, and impulsive side of Schumann; Eusebius, by contrast, is the feminine, introspective, passive, dreamy, impractical, contemplative, and sensitive side of the composer. Schumann created a third character, Master Raro, to mediate between Florestan and Eusebius and to amalgamate the inner discrepancies between the multiple personalities that the composer had written about within himself (ibid. 121). According to Schumann, "Florestan and Eusebius [are] my double nature, and I want, like Raro, to amalgamate [them] into one man" (Schumann, Brahms 1927, 77, author's translation). These multiple personalities may have been reflections of Schumann's own struggle with mental health, which manifested in the form of hallucinations, depressive episodes, an attempted suicide, and his eventual confinement to a mental institution where he ultimately died.

Hoping to prevent the obscurity of her husband's work, in 1839 Clara Schumann urged Robert to leave out character inscriptions in order to make the music more relatable and increase its appeal to the public (Watkins 2011, 115). Perhaps having taken her advice, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105* of 1851 contains no direct references to the characters, although there are distinct Florestinian and Eusebian features in the work (Daverio 1997, 462). The piece begins with a tempestuous and emotionally swirling first movement, followed by a more subdued second movement and a final, driving *perpetuum mobile* which ends the piece. Whereas the first movement powerfully integrates both the stormy and contemplative sides of the Florestan and Eusebius dichotomy in what could be considered a Raro-like

incorporation and exchange of musical ideas, the second and third movements remain separate, and less integrated. There is a general consensus that the work starts much more strongly than it ends (Tibbetts 2010, 295), and seems to lack the closure of a boisterous yet lyrical closing movement that would incorporate the Eusebian and Florestanian character traits as does the first movement.

The 1833 Malaria Pandemic took a heavy toll on the Schumann family. His sister died of the disease during the pandemic and Robert himself contracted, but ultimately recovered from it. The personal tragedy and loss were compounded for Schumann by his brother's death of tuberculosis earlier the same year. This point marked the beginning of a breakdown for Schumann: he isolated himself and avoided facing his loss by throwing himself into his composition and work on the journal he had founded (Otswald 2010, 113). The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic makes these lived experiences and confrontation with the uncertainties and tragedies of life all the more vivid.

As a result of Covid-19, I have found the theme of isolation to be especially poignant, especially with the necessity of social distancing and considerations of transmission-prevention. As an artist, I felt compelled to band together and create a community, as it were, with myself, and to explore more deeply the internal relationships between the vastly different characters that are present to my individual psyche. I, too, have struggled to come to terms with seemingly incompatible parts of myself and to incorporate them into life and artistic practice. In this way, the pandemic presented me with an opportunity to reconfigure the traces of a distant social fabric by self-collaboration as I traversed new avenues of digital and textile media to represent an individual as well as collective internal experience.

The video originates in pre-pandemic footage of me performing on the violin the predominantly Eusebian second movement of the first violin sonata superimposed on footage of me performing the preeminently Florestinian third movement of the same piece in order to combine both personas to maximum effect. The two musical lines intermingle and weave in and out as they alternate dominance to create a multidimensional, audio and visual interaction between the two dispositions. However, in imagining my virtual presentation of the fictitious fourth movement of the Schumann sonata, I see no reason to limit the visual presentation to two characters. The music is haunted by a plethora of spectators and participants, and these characters too, with their individual perspectives, found their place in my video footage.

I represent these different aspects and allow them to express themselves through the mediation of the costumes that I designed and created myself. They symbolize the parts, or aspects of my character that are ever-present in my experience. While the Florestan and Eusebius movements of Schumann's violin sonata have been combined and reimagined into a single, impactful, Raro-like fourth movement, my costuming and

video overlays express in a personalized echo, a creative vision alongside Schumann's. Once the entire troupe of representations have emerged together, they disappear with the final *pizzicato* which breaks the spell and brings the viewer back to the external world, where the multifaceted inner realm is not visible and all that can be seen is the original, isolated physical forms alone on stage.

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