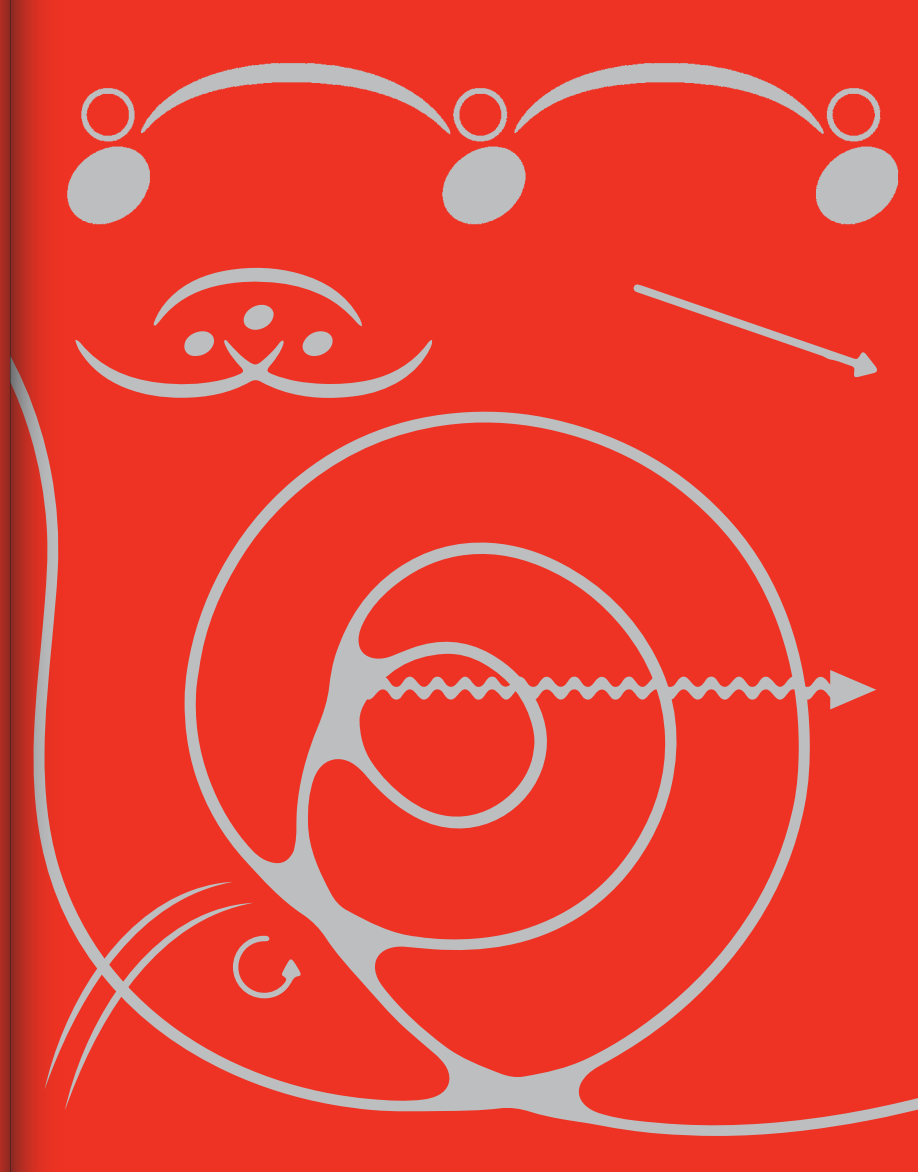


An Incubator for Afrodiasporic New Music

*Always,*

*Already  
There*

Booklet



An Incubator for Afrodiasporic New Music

*Always,*  
4.-10.11.2024

*Already  
There*

 Haus der  
Kulturen der Welt

8

## Essays

10

Wi Bin Don Dey Deh, Sotey:  
Always, Already There  
*Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung*

20

Always, Already There: A Quantum Incubator  
*George E. Lewis*

34

A Different Kind of Black  
*Leila Adu-Gilmore*

42

'One of the Wonders of African American Culture':  
The Society of Black Composers  
*Harald Kisiedu*

48

when flesh is pressed against the dark  
*Hannah Kendall*

56

Optic and Sonic Networks  
*Douglas R. Ewart*

66

Abstraction and Composing While Black;  
or, Music and the Question of Representation  
*Jessie Cox*

74

AI—Ancestral Intelligence: On Sacred Geometries,  
South African Cosmology, and the Rise of Ancestral  
Citation in Academia  
*Monthati Masebe*

80

Programme at  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt  
(HKW)

82

Talks and Panel Discussions

88

Concerts

114

Biographies



Leila Adu-Gilmore

Jessie Cox  
Jessica Ekomane  
Cedrik Fermont  
Nyokabi Kariuki

Daniele Daude  
Douglas R. Ewart  
Anthony R. Green  
Satch Hoyt  
Hannah Kendall

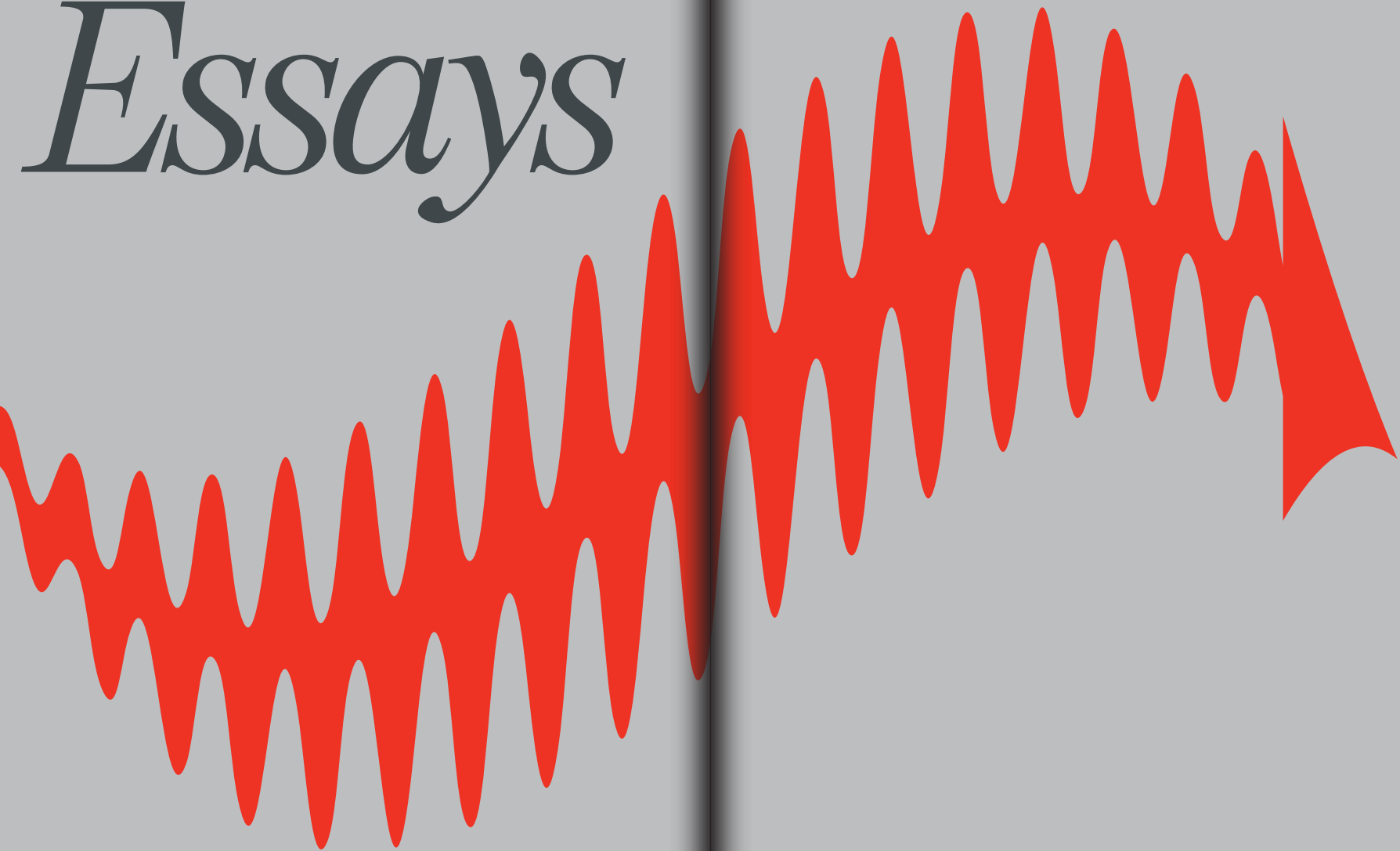
Andile Khumalo  
International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)  
Com Chor Berlin



Harald Kisiedu  
George E. Lewis  
Monthati Masebe  
Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson  
Shelly Phillips  
Njabulo Phungula  
Corie Rose Soumah  
Christina Wheeler

Elaine Mitchener  
Alyssa Regent  
Charles Uzor

# *Essays*



*Bonaventure  
Soh Bejeng  
Ndikung*

*Wi Bin Don  
Dey Deh, Sotey:  
Always,  
Already There*

In thinking of *Always, Already There*, despite the Hegelian premise from which the title takes its cue, I couldn't stop myself from reflecting on Africana studies scholar Ivan Van Sertima's seminal publication *They Came Before Columbus*.<sup>1</sup> Van Sertima lays out his fascinating research on the presence of African people in the so-called New World (that evidently wasn't so new for many obvious reasons) long before there were claims that a random guy from Genoa called Christopher Columbus had 'discovered' that part of the world. What Van Sertima and many of his colleagues at the time—the likes of Cheikh Anta Diop, Théophile Obenga, and many more—were interested in was to debunk what I would like to call the 'Christopher Columbus Complex' (CCC). Reggae legend Burning Spear aptly summarizes what these scholars wrote about in many books in his 1980 song 'Columbus' when he blasts: 'Christopher Columbus is a damn blasted liar'.<sup>2</sup> The CCC is the claim rooted in the colonial, heteronormative, patriarchal, violent logic that some people, based on their race, gender, and power constructs, are *the first* and too often *the only* ones.

As a scientist, the title *Always, Already There* also took me back to my physics classes in school, where

- 1 Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (New York: Random House, 1976).
- 2 Burning Spear, 'Columbus' (1980), on *Hail H.I.M.* (Burning Spear, 1980).

we were taught that the British Isaac Newton (1642, Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth-1727, London) was the founding father of physical optics, only to find out many years later that the Middle Eastern scientist Al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham (965, Basra-1040, Cairo) had written a whole text titled the *Book of Optics* (*Kitāb al-Manāẓir*) in 1021, a mere 621 years before Newton was born.

So, *Always, Already There* challenges us to think about those who existed before those who claim to be *first*, and those who continue to exist besides, within, and adjacent to those who claim to be *the only*. *Always, Already There*, in my opinion, is thus an anti-CCC, which is to say that it is not really an effort to claim firstness or onliness but rather an insistence that there is space not only for some but for all, and that this has not only always been the case but will continue to be the case.

*Always, Already There* is a project guest-curated at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) by one of the foremost music scholars, composers, and performers of our time, George E. Lewis. For a period of one week, composers, sound artists, and performers from the African world, across geographies, beyond continents, and outside nation-states, will come together to exchange with each other, learn from each other, get to know each other, experiment with each other, or just be. Over their week in residency, the participants will also

cultivate moments of exchange with the public through concerts, panel discussions, and lectures.

That these artists, which Lewis has invited under the umbrella of Afrodiasporic, have often been ignored by the music establishment in Europe and other places is something we do not need to spend more time on. But they have always been there and will continue to be there, and this residency gives them a possibility to make their being there more heard, more felt, more seen, and more articulated in the history of music.

Lewis makes a strong point when he writes in this publication that “Afrodiasporic” is meant to supersede notions of “home” and “away”. In the seminal interview that the cultural theorist Manthia Diawara conducted with the poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant aboard the *Queen Mary II* ship in 2009, Diawara asked Glissant what departure meant for him. Glissant responded: ‘It’s the moment when one consents not to be a single being and attempts to be many beings at the same time. In other words, for me every diaspora is the passage from unity to multiplicity.’<sup>3</sup> He goes on to state:

Let us not forget that Africa has been the source of all kinds of diasporas ... that have populated

3 Manthia Diawara, ‘Conversation with Édouard Glissant Aboard the Queen Mary II (August 2009)’, interview transcript, trans. Christopher Winks, available for download from University of Liverpool, [www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/cs1s-2/blackatlantic/research/Diawara\\_text\\_defined.pdf](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/cs1s-2/blackatlantic/research/Diawara_text_defined.pdf).



the world. One of Africa's vocations is to be a kind of foundational Unity which develops and transforms itself into a Diversity. And it seems to me that, if we don't think about that properly, we won't be able to understand what we ourselves can do, as participants in this African diaspora, to help the world to realize its true self, in other words its multiplicity, and to respect itself as such.<sup>4</sup>

The fundamental argument Glissant was making is that there is no binary between the African and the diasporian, but that the diasporic is inherent to Africanness—or, to stay within the logic of this project, that the Afrodiasporic has always already been there. To speak of the African world is to embrace that passage from unity to multiplicity; it is to collapse geographies and dismantle maps, if we think of maps as what Lee Maracle points out in an untitled poem:

4 Diawara, 'Conversation with Édouard Glissant'. It is important to think of Glissant here, as well as other scholars of creolization, in relation to the Réunionese poet Christian Jalma, a.k.a. Pink Floyd, who criticises the notion of 'creole' as a notion based on a multiplicity informed by a division (subtraction) of Bantuness/Africanness, whereas he thinks of the concept of 'Bantuization' as a notion based on a multiplicity informed by a multiplication (addition) of Bantuness/Africanness. Jalma's proposal goes hand in hand with musician Peter Tosh's claim: 'Don't care where you come from / As long as you're a black man / You're an African' (Peter Tosh, 'African' [1977], on *Equal Rights* [Columbia, EMI, 1997]). This also aligns with Māori culture, wherein there is no concept of being half or a quarter Māori—a person is just Māori, so long as one can identify their whakapapa (heritage). But that is a subject for another essay.

'Maps flip our attention from being to place, / from metaphysical time, to streets, roads and clocks / and cheat our prospective response to depth.'<sup>5</sup>

So one can think of this gathering of Afrodiasporic artists working with the sonic as that Glissantian proposal 'to help the world to realize its true self, in other words its multiplicity, and to respect itself as such'.<sup>6</sup>

From a personal vantage point, the project *Always, Already There* strikes several chords, as it sits fully in line with the work we were doing with SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, over the past ten years to research the work of composers from the African world and place them where they were supposed to be: in the fore. In 2014, I curated a research and exhibition project in the framework of the Marrakech Biennale with the title *If You Are So Smart Why Ain't You Rich*.<sup>7</sup> The point of departure was the work of composer Julius Eastman, whose work the project also borrowed its title from. The exhibition brought together international artists working predominantly with sound to deliberate on Eastman's sonic practice through the prisms of cognitive, intellectual, economic, and financial capital. That was the beginning of several projects I curated

5 Lee Maracle, 'Mapping Our Way Through History: Reflections on Knud Rasmussen's Journals', *IsumaTV* (n.d.), [www.isuma.tv/journals-knud-rasmussen-sense-memory-and-high-definition-inuit-storytelling/mapping-our-way-through](http://www.isuma.tv/journals-knud-rasmussen-sense-memory-and-high-definition-inuit-storytelling/mapping-our-way-through).

6 Diawara, 'Conversation with Édouard Glissant'.

7 Co-curated with Pauline Doutreluingne.

on Eastman, another being *The Unbreathing*<sup>8</sup> concerts and performances for MaerzMusik – Festival für Zeitfragen (Festival for Time Issues) in Berlin in 2017. *The Unbreathing* was an offshoot of the exhibition and research documentation on display at SAVVY Contemporary under the title *Let Sonofities Ring – Julius Eastman*,<sup>9</sup> followed by a more comprehensive exhibition, invocations, and performances titled *We Have Delivered Ourselves From the Tonal. Of, With, Towards, On Julius Eastman*.<sup>10</sup> These research and exhibition projects at SAVVY Contemporary and MaerzMusik, as well as at documenta 14 (held in Athens and Kassel, for which I was Curator at Large), played an important role in bringing composers from the African world into the circles of contemporary art and music (and beyond) in Germany in recent times. But it wasn't only Eastman that we were conducting research on. To name just a few others, we engaged in extensive research into and developed several exhibitions on virtuoso composer Halim El-Dabh, with the projects *Canine Wisdom for the Barking Dog – The Dog Done Gone Deaf* in 2018, as part of the Dak'Art biennial in Dakar, Senegal<sup>11</sup> and later *Here History Began. Tracing the Re/Verberations Of Halim El-Dabh* in 2021 at SAVVY Contemporary.<sup>12</sup> Other projects, such as *In What Century Will the Earth's North and South Poles*

8 Co-curated with Antonia Alampì and Berno Odo-Polzer.

9 Co-curated with Antonia Alampì and Berno Odo-Polzer.

10 Co-curated with Elena Agudio, Antonia Alampì, and Berno Odo-Polzer.

11 Co-curated with Kamila Metwaly and Marie Hélène Pereira.

12 Co-curated with Kamila Metwaly and Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock.

*Change Polarities? – On, Of, For, With Ben Patterson*,<sup>13</sup> held in 2022 and revolving around artist and composer Ben Patterson, with whom I had worked for documenta 14, also make an important part of this genealogy.

So, *Always, Already There* at HKW is a bridge not only between institutions but also between past and future research on the compositions of artists from the African world like Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, Ludovic Lamothe, Lina Mathon-Blanchet, and Nana Danso Abiam and his Pan-African Orchestra, to name but a few.

It is thus an honour to host *Always, Already There* and all the participants at HKW. I look forward to the productive exchanges around music history, composition, conceptualisation, collaboration, curating, financing and marketing, institution-making, and mediation, as well as the establishment of a space and model in and through which Afrodiasporic individuals and their practices cannot only just *be there* but actually also *thrive*. May it be a space in which the Christopher Columbus Complex is rendered redundant by the sheer impact of the brilliant compositions and performances that artists from across the globe will bring together at this institution that has the mandate of being the Haus der Kulturen der Welt—the House of World Cultures. Since the *Always, Already There* programme evokes

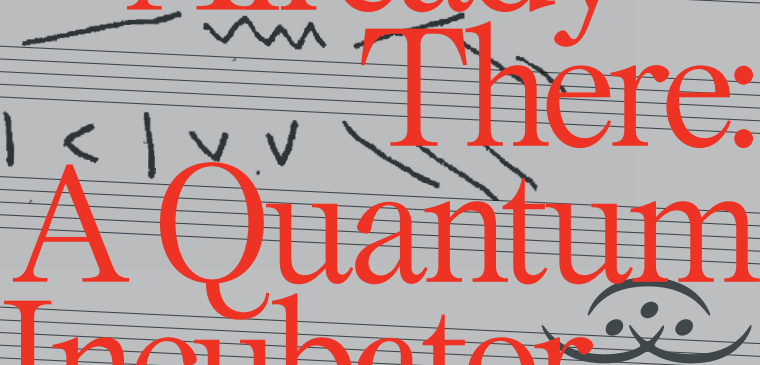
13 Co-curated with Kamila Metwaly, Berno Odo Polzer.

creole, creolité, and creolization, and considering my own work on pidginization, which could be considered a form of creolization (albeit different), I imagine the vastness of meaning that comes with such concepts when expressed in their own languages. English tells just part of the story through the title *Always, Already There*. In pidgin, ‘Wi bin don dey deh, sotey’, which would normally be said with a stretching of the end (*soteyyyyyyy*), lightens up the metaphorical space in terms of the duration of being there, the depth of being there, and the sheer intensity of being there.

George E.  
Lewis



Always,  
Already  
There:  
A Quantum  
Incubator



The immediate prehistory of *Always, Already There* goes back to 2017, when I attended a concert of the music of the queer African American composer, pianist, vocalist, and conductor Julius Eastman (1940–1990) at the MaerzMusik – Festival für Zeitfragen (Festival for Time Issues). While I was listening to these pieces, some of which I had heard in concert while Eastman was alive, it suddenly occurred to me that most of the audience members and critics celebrating (and in some cases, denigrating) him had probably never heard the work of any other Black composer.

That wasn't their fault; despite decades of associations in Europe since 1976, and having lived on the continent for five years in the 1980s, I had seen only two concerts of the music of Afrodiasporic contemporary composers. The inevitable outgrowth of this radical absence of Blackness, that silence of whiteness, is what musicologist Dana Reason has called 'the myth of absence': the implied yet spurious understanding that there are in fact no Black composers of any consequence, and thus nothing at all to hear.<sup>1</sup> However, at the Eastman concert it was clear that the Berlin audience was hungry for a radical diversification of this putatively all-white field, perhaps not suspecting that there were lots of composers out there who the curators, historians, journalists, and academicians simply weren't talking about.

1 Andreas Kolb, 'Den Mythos der Abwesenheit widerlegen: MaerzMusik-Kurator George E. Lewis über den Schwerpunkt "Tele-Visions"', *Neue Musikzeitung* 68 (March 2019), [www.nmz.de/artikel/den-mythos-der-abwesenheit-widerlegen](http://www.nmz.de/artikel/den-mythos-der-abwesenheit-widerlegen).

By 2018, in the internationally experienced wake of Black Lives Matter, some influential stakeholders in the field of contemporary music admitted publicly that they could do better. The 2018 edition of the Darmstädter Ferienkurse (Darmstadt Summer Course), one of the oldest and most important festivals for contemporary music in Europe (and indeed the world), produced a four-day conference called Defragmentation – Curating Contemporary Music. I served as an adviser and curator for the project, which involved four major European contemporary music festivals.<sup>2</sup> The German new music group Ensemble Modern's November 2020 live-streamed Afro-Modernism concert at the Philharmonie Essen, which I curated, was one of the first full programmes devoted to the work of Black contemporary music composers to be presented in Europe in many years—perhaps the first.<sup>3</sup> Björn Gottstein, then artistic director of the Donaueschinger Musiktage, the oldest contemporary music festival in the world and a key participant in Defragmentation, appeared during Ensemble Modern's Afro-Modernism in Contemporary Music symposium, which was also live-streamed, to admit publicly that the Donaueschinger Musiktage had never programmed a Black composer in its entire hundred-year history, until 2020.

2 George E. Lewis, 'A Small Act of Curation', *OnCurating* 44 (2020), special issue: 'Curating Contemporary Music', ed. Lars Petter Hagen and Rob Young, [www.on-curating.org/issue-44-reader/a-small-act-of-curation.html](http://www.on-curating.org/issue-44-reader/a-small-act-of-curation.html).

3 'Afro-Modernism in Contemporary Music: Experiencing Diversity,' Ensemble Modern (2020), [www.ensemble-modern.com/en/projects/vielfalt-erleben-202](http://www.ensemble-modern.com/en/projects/vielfalt-erleben-202).

One misunderstanding that emerged early on with the ensembles and institutions I was working with was that 'Black' contemporary composers meant African American composers. To confound this limited notion of the geographical and cultural diversity of the Black composer, my curation of the Essen event included Black composers not only from the US as well as Cuba and South Africa but also from Switzerland and the UK—thus demonstrating that Black contemporary music was by no means a foreign import to Europe but a cultural asset of the region that had until then (for whatever reason) been overlooked.

At the same time, there seemed to be no overarching description for the complex cultural provenance of post-1960 Black composers. Phrases such as 'composers of colour' were far too vague, and, moreover, some 'composers of colour' had long been included on European stages; composers of specifically African descent were the missing ones. So I felt the need for a discourse that would provide both greater precision and greater diversity.

One of the key understandings I was working with is that twenty-first century new music is becoming ever more marked by a condition of *créolité*.<sup>4</sup> *Éloge de la Créolité* (In Praise of Creoleness), an influential 1989 manifesto crafted by Caribbean writers Jean Bernabé,

4 For an initial discussion of creolization in classical music, see George E. Lewis, 'The Situation of a Creole', *Twentieth Century Music* 14/3 (2017), 442–46.

Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, begins with this ringing declaration: 'Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles. This will be for us an interior attitude—better, a vigilance, or even better, a sort of mental envelope in the middle of which our world will be built in full consciousness of the outer world.'<sup>5</sup>

Elaborating on their claim that 'the world is evolving into a state of Creoleness', the authors write:

The son or daughter of a German and a Haitian, born and living in Peking, will be torn between several languages, several histories, caught in the torrential ambiguity of a mosaic identity. To present creative depth, one must perceive that identity in all its complexity. *He or she will be in the situation of a Creole.*<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant have warned that 'our aesthetics cannot exist (cannot be authentic) without Creoleness'.<sup>7</sup> Along related lines, African composers have theorized their engagement with European and other world musical forms as a kind of intercultural encounter. The Nigerian Akin Euba, one of the most influential African composers of recent generations,

5 Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité / In Praise of Creoleness*, Édition Bilingue Français/Anglais, trans. M. B. Taleb-Khyar (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 75.

6 Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, 112.

7 Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, 89.

wrote in 1988: 'More and more Africans are therefore living in a bi-cultural area.' For Euba, the result of this intercultural encounter is 'a new type of composer'.<sup>8</sup>

In that light, we can see why, according to musicologist David R. M. Irving, '[Western Art Music] is caught in a paradox: that of claims for uniqueness being pitted simultaneously against clear evidence of its internal (and internalized) hybridity'.<sup>9</sup> My contention is that 'European' classical and especially experimental music, composed and performed around the world, is also a diasporan, creolized music. Thus, what the new music field needs now is to recognize and affirm this identity, along with its historical, geographical, and cultural cross-connections. What we seek is a new consciousness, a new identity for new music that offers not just diversity but a new complexity that can yield the kind of creative depth that the authors of *Éloge de la Créolité* envisioned. In this way, *Neue Musik* could become a true world music, one that can stand in staunch opposition to any form of anti-Blackness.

According to Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, 'Creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of

8 Originally published in German: 'Immer mehr Afrikaner leben daher in einem bi-kulturellen Bereich', and, 'ein neuer Komponisten-Typ'. Akin Euba, 'Der Afrikanische Komponist in Europa: Die Herausforderung des Bi-Kulturalismus', trans. Marion Diederichs-Lafite, *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 43/7–8 (1988), 404. My translation.

9 David R. M. Irving, 'Rethinking Early Modern "Western Art Music": A Global History Manifesto', *IMS Musicological Brainfood* 3/1 (2019), 9.

monolingualism, and of purity'.<sup>10</sup> This is how I understand musicologist Kofi Agawu: 'African composers will not be forced into a defensive mode when it comes to justifying their work; they will not be sent on a wild goose chase looking for "non-white" or "authentic" or "African" spaces that they'll be told are their own. All spaces are "potentially" African.'<sup>11</sup> Thus, it seemed to me, when curating the Philharmonie Essen performance, that a revised understanding of diaspora would be required to express the international dynamism of Afromodernist new music. The binary of 'home' and 'away' would be supplanted by a framing of diasporan experience as a rhizome of flows, from everywhere and in all directions, calling, in turn, for a mobile diasporan subject who would be, as literary scholar Ottmar Ette describes the philosophy of the eighteenth-century Afro-German philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo, '*ohne festen Wohnsitz*'—without a fixed abode.<sup>12</sup>

By 2023, I began calling this kind of new music 'Afro-diasporic', a term that began to resonate in both Europe and the US, and perhaps elsewhere. The bilingual German-English volume co-edited by myself and musicologist Harald Kisiedu, *Composing While Black*:

10 Irving, 'Rethinking Early Modern "Western Art Music"', 90.

11 Kofi Agawu, 'African Art Music and the Challenge of Postcolonial Composition', in *Dynamic Traditions: Global Perspectives on Contemporary Music*, ed. Elisa Erkelenz and Katja Heldt (Stuttgart: SWR, 2021), 186.

12 See Ottmar Ette, *Anton Wilhelm Amo – Philosophieren ohne festen Wohnsitz: Eine Philosophie der Aufklärung zwischen Europa und Afrika* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2014).

*Afrodiasporische Neue Musik Heute / Afrodiasporic New Music Today* (Wolke Verlag, 2023), became an important node of that resonance, which led me to one part of the title of the current residency—'An Incubator for Afrodiasporic New Music'.

The purpose of this residency is to collectively nurture and develop new modes of expertise on contemporary Afrodiasporic sonic experimentalism, as well as to present perspectives that have been largely ignored in academic research, concert programmes, and journalistic coverage, especially in Europe. Afrodiasporic composers, sound artists, and scholars from Guadeloupe, France, the United Kingdom, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States, South Africa, Kenya, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Canada, Switzerland, and Jamaica, among others, are staying throughout the week to take part in the residency's strong public-facing component, which includes panel discussions, presentations, and concerts. The residency also includes an inward-facing component, in which participants can encourage new collaborations and discussions among themselves to develop ideas about where Afrodiasporic new music could be headed.

This residency is conceived as a space for intergenerational, international innovation, a kind of new complexity of identity that fits precisely into the remit of Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW). Thus, the new music group in residence for *Always, Already There*—the International Contemporary Ensemble—is perfectly

suited to the aims of the residency. The ensemble's notion of 'polyaspora' is intercultural, intermedial, and interdisciplinary, as well as conscious, collaborative, creolized, and connected, across borders of aesthetics, practice, gender, ethnicity, race, and nation.

The public panels engage with a variety of issues: the state of African composition today, articulations of interdisciplinarity, histories of Afrodiasporic engagement with contemporary music, technology and social issues, emerging practices of curation, and the creation of new experts, subjects, histories, and identities. Residency participants were asked to suggest topics for the internal discussions. These topics include funding, sustainable programmes, decolonization, documentation, mentoring, exchanges with institutional structures, access, representation and inclusion, research, networking and collaboration, curation, uses of technology, and much more.

Of course, I take full responsibility for the naming and framing of the residency. In particular, my use of the term 'Afrodiasporic' is meant to supersede notions of 'home' and 'away', as expressed in the common understanding of 'Africa and the diaspora'. This binary, as I saw it, tends all too often to encourage an essentialist or nativist framing. Moreover, I wanted to move beyond colour- and race-based notions of the Afrodiaspora. Otherwise, the incubator could have been about 'Schwarze Neue Musik' (Black new music). For example, one of the subjects of *Composing While Black*, the

Egyptian sound artist Jacqueline George, is not Black. And we would hardly exclude one of the most important Afrodiasporic experimentalists, the Egyptian Halim El-Dabh, from the discussion.

This could easily be a topic for the internal discussions that will take place during the residency. In these discussions, this group of sound artists, composers, and scholars could try to explore, if not define, various relationships to the Afrodiasporic, rather than having it 'applied' to everyone like make-up. As a start, to lighten and deepen the discussion, I invoke the following from Peter Tosh's classic reggae song:

Don't care where you come from  
As long as you're a Black man  
You're an African  
No mind your nationality  
You have got the identity  
Of an African  
And if you come from Switzerland  
(You are an African)  
And if you come from Germany  
(You are an African)  
And if you come from Russia  
(You are an African)  
And if you come from Taiwan  
(You are an African)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Peter Tosh, 'African' (1977), on *Equal Rights* (Columbia, EMI, 1997).



My conception of the Afrodiasporic as a dynamic of flows with creolized identity formation also draws sustenance from anthropologist J. Lorand Matory's account of the Afrodiasporic religion Candomblé. Matory writes:

Candomblé and the late 19th- and early-20th-century Afro-Atlantic world constituted just as massive a flow of people, in proportion to the contemporaneous population of the world—and just as massive a disjuncture among the constituting flows of 'people, machinery, money, images, and ideas'—as does today's 'late capitalism'.<sup>14</sup>

Looking specifically at the relation of these flows to identity, Matory continues:

We people of African descent sometimes 'imagine' ourselves primarily as members of a specific territorial nation, sometimes as subjects of a particular empire, sometimes as Europeans, sometimes as Jejes, sometimes as Native Americans, sometimes as white, sometimes as middle-class people, sometimes as young people, sometimes as women, sometimes as environmentalists, and so forth. The black Atlantic is thus a geographical focus, an identity option, and a context of meaning-making, rather than

14 J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matrarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 269–70.

a uniquely bounded, impenetrable, or over-terminating thing.<sup>15</sup>

Important for my understanding of Afrodiasporicity is this:

Some analytic metaphors are unsuited to the realities of the black Atlantic and of translocalism generally. This study suggests the greater utility of 'rhizomes' and, more important, 'dialogue' than 'roots', 'survivals', and 'diaspora' to explain the Candomblé and the Afro-Atlantic cultural transformations that gave Yoruba culture its preeminence among the West African models of New World black religiosity and artistry.<sup>16</sup>

The title *Always, Already There* comes from literary theorist James A. Snead's critique of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's interpretation of African culture:

The African, first, overturns all European categories of logic. Secondly, he has no idea of history or progress, but instead allows 'accidents and surprises' to take hold of his fate. He is also not aware of being at a lower stage of development and perhaps even has no idea of what development is. Finally, he is 'immediate'

15 Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 273–74.

16 Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 274.

and intimately tied to nature with all its cyclical, non-progressive data.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, Snead's methodology allows him to highlight Hegel's inadvertent identification of one of the African's great strengths: 'Having no self-consciousness, he is "immediate"—i.e., *always there*—in any given moment. Here we can see that, being there, the African is also *always already there*, or perhaps *always there before*, whereas the European is *headed there* or, better, *not yet there*.'<sup>18</sup> This idea of immediacy points to a notion of 'always, already there' as a form of quantum entanglement—an idea that did not exist in Hegel's time.

Finally, it should be noted that Afrodiasporic music is a huge and highly diverse field. This residency, as well as the accompanying concerts, concentrates on experimental new music, in full recognition of another version of the myth of Afrodiasporic absence, identified by critical theorist Fred Moten as 'a vast interdisciplinary text representative not only of a problematically positivist conclusion that the avant-garde has been exclusively Euro-American, but of a deeper, perhaps unconscious, formulation of the avant-garde as necessarily not black.'<sup>19</sup>

17 James A. Snead, 'On Repetition in Black Culture', *African American Review* 50/4 (2017), 650.

18 Snead, 'On Repetition in Black Culture', 650.

19 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 32.

At the same time, we should maintain our awareness that experimental music is not a genre—it is an achievement. In that light, I offer my heartfelt thanks to the HKW team for their confidence in this project and what could develop from it.

Leila Adu-  
Gilmore



A Different  
Kind of  
Black

As a composer-theorist, Assistant Professor of Music Technology at New York University, and founder of the Critical Sonic Practice Lab, I investigate and publish on music composition, improvisation, and electronic musics, particularly those of Africa, the African diaspora, and the Americas. As a composer-performer, I engage in composition, improvisation, and electronic musics, interchangeably. I developed the concept of Critical Sonic Practice to assert the inextricable links between different types of Black, local, and Indigenous musics and their processes. At the same time—and this can be difficult for non-Black people to comprehend or learn—Black abstract thoughts, ideas, and artistic implementations can be *waaaay* out. Black musics can be precomposed or improvised, innovating across genres from popular to contemporary classical and experimental genres. Stemming from ardently participatory expression, we are emboldened by our bodily connection to music.

For many of us, Europe represents those who came to steal our civilizations and our lands. Through neo-colonialism, Europe continues to strip away our resources while asking us to borrow money from international banks to pay debts that are inconceivably high. And Europe still xenophobically hates our children. However, for some of us formerly colonized, enslaved, Jim Crowed, and apartheid African peoples of the earth, Europe has, at times, been an ironic haven. Paris and Berlin in particular came to represent

a space of artistic freedom, where maybe, just maybe, Africans in the diaspora could be *a different kind of Black*.

And that presents some opportunities: we can be our original, hyperconnected, diasporic, open, civilized selves. Black musics can be mixtures of improvised (such as, but not limited to, jazz), classical (notated), and electronic forms. European musics and education systems enforced a colonial and empirical split between these forms, which I outline in my article ‘Critical Sonic Practice: Decolonizing Boundaries in Music Research’.<sup>1</sup> Critical Sonic Practice recognizes the colonial history (and current repercussions) of false separations between categories of musical engagement—theory, ethnography, composition, improvisation, audience participation, and dance.

Through the lens of Critical Sonic Practice, we ask: Can music be a Black language? How might preconceived notions of Indigenous peoples, such as the ‘noble savage’ trope, cause implicit bias in music research and criticism? What outcomes do these exclusions cause for communities of colour? How do we amplify the positive outcomes of Black music and Black processes, and fix negative outcomes? What participatory actions in research enable our communities to progress and

<sup>1</sup> Leila Adu-Gilmore, ‘Critical Sonic Practice: Decolonizing Boundaries in Music Research,’ *Continental Thought & Theory* 3/3 (2021), 187–209.

create? What questions do we, as researchers, need to ask ourselves? What would a Black, Indigenous, and diasporan music theory and composition practice look like instead of a white colonial one?

Critical Sonic Practice investigates and practices music-making as a continuing decolonizing discourse, centring on marginalized musics and music-makers, and embracing humanity’s connection with nature. Colonial thought has attempted to suppress Indigenous connections to land; this is a political act, as extractivist colonizers steal resources, impoverishing peoples who would otherwise thrive, all in the name of an educated and encultured ‘civilization’. This idea of civilization has erased Black and brown thought and teaching, allowing for a dangerous assault on Mother Nature herself. Mending this split between nature and human is inherent to the Black and Indigenous nature of Critical Sonic Practice.

As a Ghanaian British *Pākehā* (New Zealander of European or non-Māori descent), my main associations with Europe, made through history classes, were British royalty, World Wars, colonization, and empire building. Growing up in Aotearoa, I was an experimental outsider, part of a scene, but erased as being neither ‘New Zealand music’ enough, ‘indie’ enough, nor ‘jazzy’, ‘classical’, or ‘experimental’ enough. Berlin and New York, I was told, were places where you can creatively do whatever you want. I have performed my art songs

and improvisation in Berlin, and I have had wonderful experiences there. Walking the streets gives a tangible sense of history. Images of the Berlin Wall viscerally join with sonic destructions, from post-war composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen to literally collapsing new buildings with the namesake Einstürzende Neubauten, a group that single-handedly inspired me to study electroacoustic music and computing.

However, when we travel as Black creators, our geographic separation from our communities (wherever they are) creates the risk of us becoming disconnected. We may forget our brothers and sisters in our struggle to remain in a far-off Petri dish, fermenting creative acts. In this collaboration at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), my calling is to remain connected to the dichotomy of Black and brown joy and suffering. I aim to resist the complacency that can arise from being viewed as an other and disengaged outsider. I want to connect with the local joy and suffering of the earth and ground that I am walking on.

As a Black collaborator in Berlin, I ask questions that emerge from my own Critical Sonic Practice:

What do we, as people and trees, have to sing to each other?

What suffering have you or your ancestors overcome to arrive here?

Where do you find your joy?

How can we acknowledge Black suffering without nursing white fragility (encouraging this emotional and artistic labour for themselves) through our magical power of music?

How can we acknowledge white along with Black suffering through systemic oppression and poverty?

How can we do this in traditional concert settings?

As a person of white and Black backgrounds, how can I work with my own whiteness and Blackness as a composer?

How can we sing new futures to each other?

These questions show that conversation and reflection are necessary parts of decolonial work. Critical Sonic Practice is not a static position; it is a rubric through which to investigate the work at hand.

Current access to technology and speedy innovation has not necessarily created more connection between people. Phones have become the main device for computing, including music listening, at first in parts of the world with less access to computers; this has trickled up to high-income economies as well. It seems that a phone has become more and more necessary for everything. Additionally, artificial intelligence and machine learning, while creating new algorithmic tastemakers and music industry channels, have not improved conditions for musicians.

Live music and collaboration, however, kinetically create instantaneous connections between humans in the same space. These live music rehearsals, collaborations, and connections are what makes this residency at HKW so meaningful. Centering Afrological music practices across musical forms in the heart of Europe is, in a way, the perfect demonstration of Critical Sonic Practice. Working with the International Contemporary Ensemble, we will create, perform, and—to use that strangely apt English word—‘play’ music together, as an Afrological act.

# Harald Kisiedu

‘One of the  
Wonders of  
African American  
Culture’:  
The Society of  
Black Composers

In May 1968, a group of mostly New York–based African American composers from diverse musical backgrounds established the critically important yet largely unsung Society of Black Composers. Their aim was ‘to provide a permanent forum for the exposure of Black Composers, their works and their thoughts; to collect and disseminate information related to Black Composers and their activities; and to enrich the cultural life of the community at large.’<sup>1</sup> This association of over fifty composers was founded by Dorothy Rudd Moore and her husband, cellist Kermit Moore, Carman Moore (not related), Talib Rasul Hakim (then known as Stephen Chambers), and Fluxus composer and artist Benjamin Patterson. Other society members included Ornette Coleman, Herbie Hancock, Archie Shepp, Olly Wilson, Alvin Singleton, Oliver Nelson, Marion Brown, Wendell Logan, Adolphus Hailstork, Coleridge–Taylor Perkinson, and Noel DaCosta.<sup>2</sup> The Society of Black Composers’ significance notwithstanding, the organization has largely been overlooked in the wider discourse surrounding new music and Black experimentalism. As a consequence, hardly any research has been done on it.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Society of Black Composers, concert programme, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 12 November 1969, Hamm Archives, Brooklyn Academy of Music.
- 2 The author is indebted to Carman Moore for providing the information regarding Archie Shepp’s membership in the Society of Black Composers.
- 3 For notable exceptions, see David N. Baker Jr, ‘Indiana University’s Black Music Committee’, in *Black Music in Our Culture: Curricular Ideas on the Subjects, Materials and Problems*, ed. Dominique–René de Lerma (Kent, OH: Kent University Press, 1970), 12–24; Eileen Southern, ‘America’s Black Composers of Classical Music’, *Music Educators Journal* 62/3 (1975), 46–59; Hildred Roach, *Black American Music: Past and Present* (Boston: Crescendo Publishing, 1976).

The society's establishment should be situated in the larger context of the mid-1960s rise of the community-oriented Black Arts Movement, which was launched by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. This movement in turn was instrumental in the emergence of various collectives of Black experimentalists such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, established in 1965 on Chicago's South Side, and the Black Artists Group, established in 1968 in St Louis.

It is not devoid of a certain irony that, as Carman Moore has phrased it, the society's foundation took place 'with gracious advice from White composer Beatrice Witkin'.<sup>4</sup> Witkin, who as a woman composer of electronic music had certainly experienced her share of marginalization, one day had a conversation with Moore in which he shared with her that he didn't get enough performances and wasn't sure how this situation could be rectified. Her advice was: 'Start your own group!' As Moore has related,

Dorothy Rudd Moore came up with the title 'Society of Black Composers'. And I said: 'Yeah, let's do that'. I agreed to be the secretary treasurer of the group. Ben Patterson became the president and then off we went.<sup>5</sup>

4 Carman Moore, *Crossover: An American Bio* (Rochester Hills, MI: Grace Publishing, 2011), 45.

5 Carman Moore, interview with the author (Zoom), 8 October 2021.

The society's mission was to highlight the music of Black contemporary composers through concerts, symposia, and lectures in which the members' compositions were performed and their methodologies and aesthetics discussed. For instance, on 28 May 1968, the Society of Black Composers, in conjunction with New York mayor John Lindsay's Composers Recognition Week, presented 'A Unique Recital of Black Composers and a Symposium', featuring compositions by Talib Rasul Hakim, Carman Moore, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Hale Smith, and others. The symposium, titled 'The Black Composer: Where Has He Been and Where Is He Going?', was moderated by composer and pianist John Lewis, the musical director of the Modern Jazz Quartet. Lewis had co-founded the Modern Jazz Society in 1955 and the Society for Jazz and Classical Music the following year.

No longer content to be cast in the convenient role of the epistemological outsider, the composers associated with the Society of Black Composers challenged fundamental assumptions about constructions of western classical music as a historically and institutionally white space, as well as received knowledge in terms of a supposedly unified Black musical aesthetic. As the society's May 1969 newsletter put it:

And while a common vocabulary or grammar is not even desirable among black composers, a new and highly desirable consensus of positive and assertive attitudes is clearly emerging. The



questions of a year ago—most often concerning which specific musical sounds and materials would be necessary to make black music—are no longer necessary. We know that because we are black, we are making black music. And we hear it, too!<sup>6</sup>

The society's members were mobile subjects, unconstrained by notions of genre or tradition or simplistic ideas about Black music. Dissolving lines between composition and improvisation and classical music and so-called vernacular music, they made no distinction between jazz and classical music. In doing so, the society's members broke barriers that other people—who, a decade later, were portrayed as the embodiment of a postmodern aesthetic—would be credited as knocking down. As Carman Moore remembers:

We just went out and invited everybody we could think of. The fact that jazz has been so deeply intellectual at that time meant it was contemporary music. We just called in as many jazz composers especially the ones who were truly composers as opposed to just players. We got quite a roster of fabulous musical thinkers together for a few years.<sup>7</sup>

6 Quoted in Eileen Southern, 'America's Black Composers of Classical Music', *Music Educators Journal* 62/4 (1975), 56.

7 Moore, interview.


Before disbanding in 1973, the Society of Black Composers 'held bimonthly meetings open to all active members, published a bimonthly newsletter', and during its 1968/69 season presented '24 works by 18 black composers ... within the programs of four major concerts'.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, the collective made a decisive contribution not only by drawing attention to the glaring absence of Black contemporary music from concert programs but also by creating an awareness of the mere existence and cultural significance of this music. In the words of Carman Moore: 'The Society exhibited one of the wonders of African American culture and simply to exhibit that as a wonder is a revolutionary act'.<sup>9</sup>

8 Zita D'Azalia Allen, 'Society of Black Composers in View', *New York Amsterdam News*, 7 June 1969, 38.

9 Moore, interview.

# Hannah Kendall

when  
flesh is  
pressed  
against the  
dark

 The complex, repetitious workings of transatlantic slavery are what Antonio Benítez-Rojo would describe as the ‘Plantation Machine’.<sup>1</sup> *when flesh is pressed against the dark* (2024), my work for the ensemble loadbang, a quartet of baritone voice, trumpet, bass clarinet, and trombone, is the final piece in a triptych of works exploring this multidimensional machinic system that continues to repeat in renewed, yet interconnected, ways as part of an intricately extensive framework.

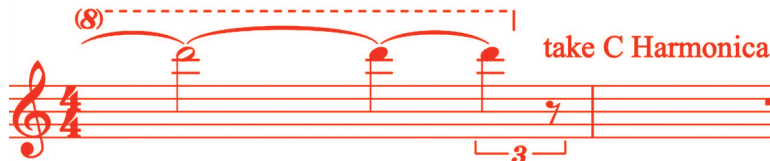
fast wah-wah —————> slow —————> fast

The titles for all three pieces come from the writings of novelist Ocean Vuong. *shouting forever into the receiver* (2022), commissioned by Südwestrundfunk for Ensemble Modern, considers how the Machine’s output feeds back on itself to fuel the next repetition. *Even sweetness can scratch the throat* (2023), written with the support of Columbia Composers for the Manson and Wavefield ensembles in the UK and US, respectively, explores the role of addiction in Caribbean sugar plantations, a collection of integrated smaller machines operating as part of the larger Machine. Marcus Boon elaborates: ‘Repetition offers the promise of escape, which then feeds structurally back into the marketplace as addiction—or enjoyment’.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, *when flesh is pressed against the*

- 1 Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, tr. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 4.
- 2 Marcus Boon, *The Politics of Vibration: Music as a Cosmopolitical Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 220.

*dark* is a meditation on ‘captive flesh’ in the Middle Passage.<sup>3</sup> As Hortense J. Spillers writes in her essay ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book’, ‘the captive personality did not know where s/he was, we could say that they were the culturally “unmade”, thrown in the midst of a figurative darkness that “exposed” their destinies to an unknown course’.<sup>4</sup>

While Paul Gilroy, for example, considers the image of the ship, the vessel for enslaved Africans in the Middle Passage, as a mobile unit, and furthermore, as ‘a living, micro-cultural, micro-political, system in motion’,<sup>5</sup>



I wanted to situate *when flesh is pressed against the dark* specifically within the flux of the oceanic suspension suggested by Spillers, as opposed to the condition/s of the route. However, the route itself is also a vital element of this suspended space, and certainly indicative of the Plantation Machine, which Benítez-Rojo describes as ‘a machine that flows and interrupts at the same time’.<sup>6</sup> In other words, I could not give thought to

3 Hortense J. Spillers, ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book’, *Diacritics* 17/2 (Summer 1987), 67.

4 Spillers, ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe’, 72.

5 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 4.

6 Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 28.

one without the other, and instead needed to probe what it might mean to be culturally ‘unmade’ within a ‘micro-cultural’ situation that is a component of the transatlantic slave trade’s macro-configuration. In doing so, I considered Fred Moten’s essay ‘Black Topological Existence’, and particularly the material question of ‘how to overcome the reduction of body to flesh, as Spillers thinks it, while recognising, as they also say, that flesh comes before body’.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, these contemplations seek to find, examine, and execute the ways through which the repetitions of the Machine can be resisted and cut through, to disrupt its interruptive flow. For instance, Elaine Mitchener’s structurally improvised work *SWEET TOOTH* (2017) seeks to metaphorically repair the rupture of the Middle Passage, which she terms the ‘Universal Slide’,<sup>8</sup> at its point of occurrence with the sound of her breath—activating the conversion of flesh to body; attempting to humanize, liberate, and attend to the captive so that the ‘Slide’ is obstructed. Ashon T. Crawley proposes that breath is a crucial factor: ‘Breathing, then, is the cultivation and care of flesh’.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, *SWEET TOOTH*’s

7 Fred Moten, ‘Black Topological Existence’, in *Arthur Jafa: A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions*, ed. Joseph Constable and Amira Gad (London: Koenig Books, 2018), 17.

8 Hannah Kendall, ‘Cutting Through and Resisting the Plantation Machine in Elaine Mitchener’s *SWEET TOOTH* and the Musical Work shouting forever into the receiver’ (DMA diss, Columbia University, 2024), 4.

9 Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 78.

second chapter, ‘Bound’, concludes with Mitchener figuratively transforming her body into a sugar mill, the sort that would have been the central machine on the plantations, including enslaved bodies, as flesh, fused into its technological structure: ‘We are the people working a machine, and then we are the machinery’, Mitchener says.<sup>10</sup>

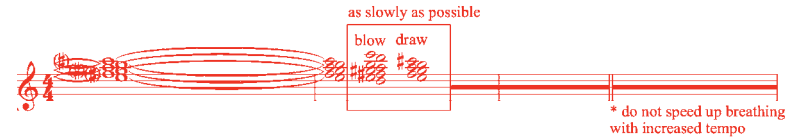
Mitchener vigorously expels breath as her body makes the transformation into the mill. As I have discussed before, its forced regularity ‘presents the duplexity of the mechanized grind: that of the cane, and the enslaved, in addition to the desire and pleasure garnered from the sugar it produces.’<sup>11</sup> However, it has a further function: Mitchener’s breath demonstrates a persistent determination to liberate captive flesh from the plantation—from the depths of the Atlantic and, of course, from the hold of the ship, which, in *SWEET TOOTH*, is represented by the audience, arranged in uncomfortable, tightly organized seating. As Mitchener explains, ‘everyone is in the ship. I think those who are watching don’t realize they’re there.’<sup>12</sup>

10 Elaine Mitchener, ‘Breaking the Chains: Elaine Mitchener on the British Empire’s Legacy of Cruelty’, interview by Chris Bohn, *The Wire*, February 2018, [www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/interviews/elaine-mitchener-sweet-tooth-interview](http://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/interviews/elaine-mitchener-sweet-tooth-interview).

11 Kendall, ‘Cutting Through and Resisting the Plantation Machine’, 16.

12 Hannah Kendall and Elaine Mitchener, ‘Water Long Like the Dead’: The Interruption and Flow of Time in Elaine Mitchener’s *SWEET TOOTH*, in *Composing While Black: Afrodiasporic New Music Today*, ed. Harald Kisiedu and George E. Lewis (Hofheim, Germany: Wolke Verlag, 2023), 261.

In my earlier analysis of Mitchener’s *SWEET TOOTH*, I propose that ‘the actual sound of the breathing—its aurality, as opposed to its action alone—provides the potential for full humanizing liberation.’<sup>13</sup> I wanted to



use similar methods in *when flesh is pressed against the dark*. However, I make the auditory experience of breathing sound via harmonicas. As in *shouting forever into the receiver* and *Even sweetness can scratch the throat*, players are instructed to ‘inhale/exhale as slowly as possible until indicated, each independently of the others’,<sup>14</sup> blowing into and drawing out of the instruments at their own rates. As in *SWEET TOOTH*, I needed the breath to occupy a ‘blue’ place, which is the term I use to reference ‘in-between’ spaces devoid of centre or axis—zones of connectivity where transformation can occur.<sup>15</sup> The sound of Mitchener’s breath (the transformative trigger) comes from her own body, which is ‘blue’—not only for the reason that, in this instance, as a mill, it represents both human flesh and machine but also because, as Kelly Brown Douglas says, ‘the black woman’s body is a blues body’.<sup>16</sup> The incorporation of

13 Kendall, ‘Cutting Through and Resisting the Plantation Machine’, 19–20.

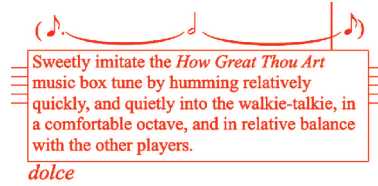
14 *shouting forever into the receiver*, music score (Berlin: G. Ricordi & Co. Bühnen- und Musikverlag GmbH), 2.

15 Kendall, ‘Cutting Through and Resisting the Plantation Machine’, 24.

16 Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 12.

harmonicas seeks to replicate the same ‘blueness’, but by creating a confluence of different time zones made by each player breathing freely. The organic group inhale–exhale actions create an expansive, meshed sound world of intersecting temporal spaces.

In *when flesh is pressed against the dark*, a distant tinkling music box playing the hymn ‘How Great Thou Art’ conjures the idea that flesh can certainly become a liberated body, perhaps even outside of the Machine. Consider the song’s lyrics—‘Then sings my soul’, ‘what joy shall fill my heart’—simultaneously acting as an invocation as the baritone ardently hums the tune in duet with its liberated partner. These are assertions of agency via connected dimensions—between the Middle Passage and an as yet unknown free, unbound place. I look to Saidiya V. Hartman here, who writes,



Sweetly imitate the *How Great Thou Art* music box tune by humming relatively quickly, and quietly into the walkie-talkie, in a comfortable octave, and in relative balance with the other players.

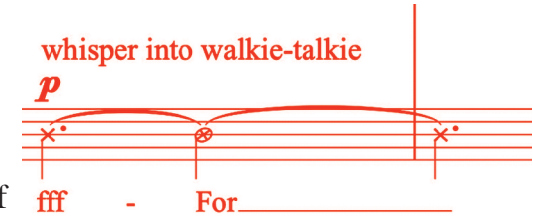
*dolce*

The particular status of the slave as object and as subject requires a careful consideration of the notion of agency if one wants to do more than ‘endow’ the enslaved with agency as some sort of gift dispensed by historians and critics to the dispossessed.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54.

That is to say, the notion of the enslaved as mere striped flesh objects can be transcended; that when flesh is pressed against the dark, it can, does, and will seek to have a singing soul in the light. Perhaps this desire also helps form the micro-cultural system that Gilroy references, as part of the route: the process of bodies being culturally made within, through, and in defiance of the Machine.

whisper into walkie-talkie



*p*

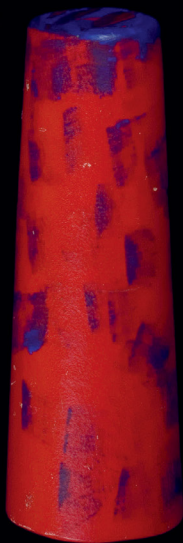
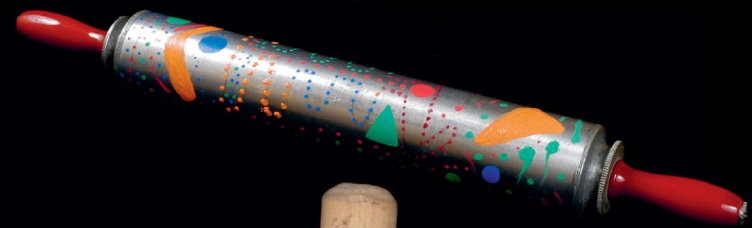
fff - For \_\_\_\_\_

*Douglas  
R. Ewart*

Optic  
and Sonic  
Networks

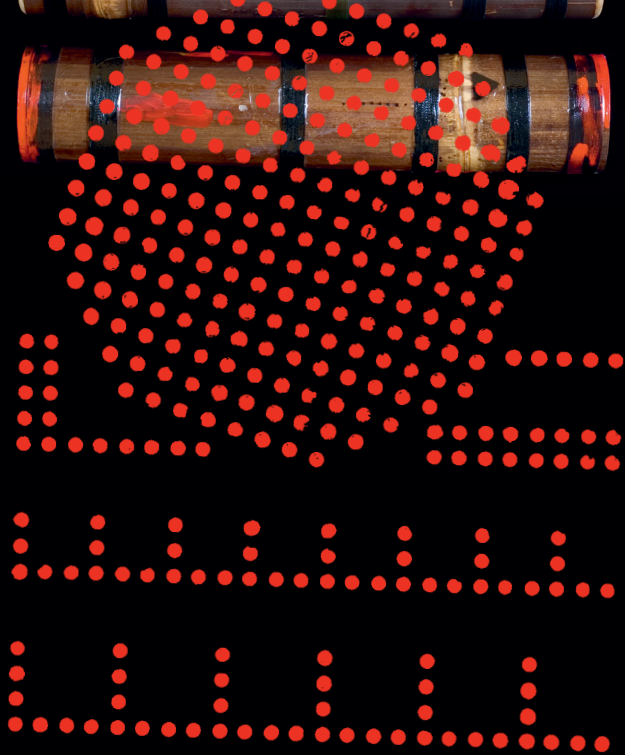
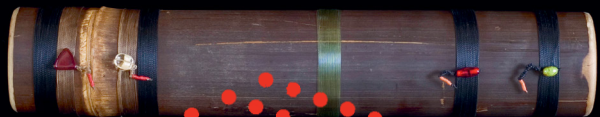










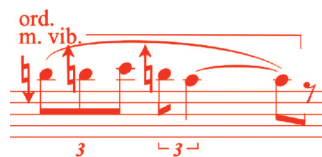


# Jessie Cox

## Abstraction and Composing While Black; or, Music and the Question of Representation

→ ■ The question that prompted this essay is: What is the possible meaning of fighting for Black musicians, composers, and Black (experimental) sounds—for representation and more? This question is on the order of the enforcement of the borders of representation. Blackness seems to present a problem for an ‘antiblack’ world and its control over representation, claiming absolute knowledge, authority, and sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> Why are Black lives’ musical activities strongly policed by way of genres, historical narratives, systemic exclusion and by what they may say or sound like? *ff*

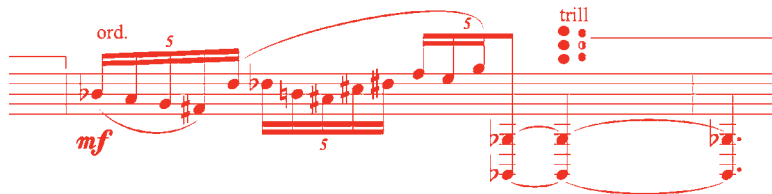
It was my encounter with Charles Uzor’s 8’46” *George Floyd in Memoriam* (2020) that brought me to confront the question of abstraction and representation, and why for me, as a Black Swiss person, this troubling of the distinction between the two is both a musical and an extramusical concern. Uzor’s work brings us back to John Cage’s 4’33” (1952)—due to the title and musical material—but it does so with a difference. 8’46” *George Floyd in Memoriam* presents two different types of silences: mere



breathing sounds, for seven minutes and forty-six seconds, and absolute silence, for another minute. The piece engages the duration of Floyd’s murder on

1 I use uppercase ‘Black’ when referring directly to Black people and culture. Lowercase ‘blackness’ denotes the concept of blackness in excess of any particular historical or geographic instantiation of it as a people.

25 May 2020, which became a symbol for protests. In my forthcoming monograph, *Sounds of Black Switzerland*, I contextualize these works in relation to the genre of black square paintings and abstract visual art, since Cage's "4'33" is seen as a musical corollary to such paintings.



Of importance is the encounter between abstraction and representation as a question of Blackness and its relation to Black lives. "8'46" *George Floyd in Memoriam* problematizes a kind of absoluteness of the border between abstraction and representation, or the real—an absoluteness built on anti-Blackness. We might open our line of enquiry by way of a remark about the black square painting genre: Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915), which is credited as the beginning of modern abstract painting, was revealed by way of an X-ray analysis to make reference to Alphonse Allais's black square painting from 1884, *Combat de Nègres dans une cave pendant la nuit*—a racist joke.<sup>2</sup>

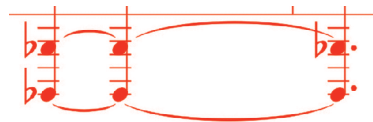
<sup>2</sup> Allais also painted other one-colour square joke paintings and is credited with the first absolutely silent piece of music, "Marche funèbre composée pour les funérailles d'un grand homme sourd" (Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Great Deaf Man, 1884). Hannah Black elaborates in more detail on this case in "Fractal Freedoms", *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 411 (2016), 4–9.

Antiblackness emerges as a claim over the border of abstraction, as control over representation—over meaning and sense. **<pp** This becomes evident when investigating the emergence of national identity and modern sovereignty. A poignant example, connected to Uzor, is the matter of Swiss national identity. Among the methods employed to define and declare a national identity, so as to claim sovereign authority in relation to other emerging nation states in the nineteenth century, were national exhibitions. The first one in Switzerland took place in 1883. But it is the second one, of 1896, that may aid us in unpacking the question of representation and blackness. That particular national exhibition had a fake Swiss village, with inhabitants living there for the duration of the exhibition, demonstrating idealized Swiss life. There was also a Black village, called *village noir*. These kinds of Black villages were quite common at the time throughout Europe and toured outside the national exhibition as well. This village portrayed an imagined and stereotyped Blackness with real Senegalese people. Even the clothes had to remain 'authentically Black' / an authenticity determined by whiteness. As a newspaper ad in the *Neue Zürcher Nachrichten* from 12 September 1925 reveals, the Senegalese people had to wear local clothes over their 'African costumes' because of the cold temperatures. This fact was highlighted, possibly in hopes of getting more visitors, and advertised as



trill ——— trill  
 overblow  
 M  
 12

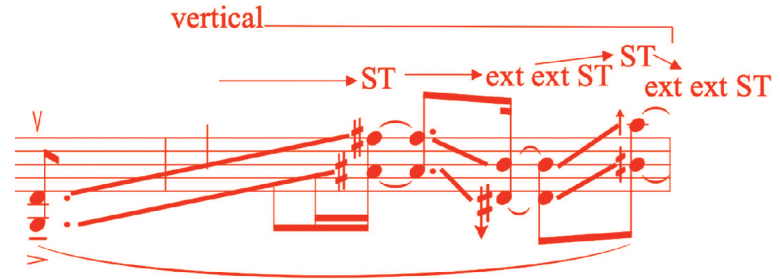
somewhat of an oddity. It is not clear whether the two deaths that occurred (as well as numerous illnesses that, in the same ad, were claimed to have been cured) were related to the less-than-adequate clothing provided for the season. Even when the inhabitants of the *village noir* begged for money, they were vilified, because to remain authentic they could not reveal the ways in which they suffered, or how their containedness as others was a policed and *fabulated* border. But they, those Black people, did not remain in their place. In fact, they received and wore clothes of, and even had relations with, got married to, and had children with, the 'locals'.



Blackness is levied as an abstracted other by anti-blackness to control the fight over representation, or speech—the right to have a political, social, and intelligible voice. The border between abstraction and representable truth is policed by the white gaze, to use Frantz Fanon's term. Uzor's *8'46" George Floyd in Memoriam* asks us to think about this border between abstraction and representation (or truth and reality). In this blurring and troubling of the border, the work points out that the enforcement of proper representation rests on control over the relations between abstraction and representation, and that this is a musical question. Blackness as abstraction cannot suddenly be real, cannot suddenly represent



something—a voice, a life, a story—or have meaning. Inaudibility and audibility become blurred and the distinction between silence and sound troubled by *8'46" George Floyd in Memoriam*.



Thus, why music? Why unthinkable music, or, as some call it, new music? This question moves alongside the question of unauthorized relations between and among abstraction and representation. Why are Black composers, Black sounds, deemed inadequate when they challenge listening? For the same reason why, around the 1900s, US newspaper articles documented how white society became appalled at 'the Negro', 'the Muslim', and 'the Native', for showing sounds of lynching, and not the people who did the lynching or the society that allowed this to take place (whether this showing actually took place or not is not verifiable). Black Lives Matter bespeaks unauthorized movement, speech, mattering, meaning, and so forth, thus troubling representation's self-proclaimed wholeness and absolute veracity and authority.



Composing while Black is a ‘strategic abstraction’, to borrow a term that Margo N. Crawford develops in relation to the Black Arts Movement in her book *Black Post-Blackness*.<sup>3</sup> → **ST** It is a way to change the world in unthinkable and unforeseeable ways. Black representation shifts the coordinates of this world because it unleashes the possibility of imagining new ways of sounding together as a refusal of the policing of what can be said/sounded, or even of what can be a life/alive. This is the dare that Music presents to me, to make new meanings in excess of a final word and an anti-Black world.

overblow  
M

12 12 6 3 6

impro.

pp

<sup>3</sup> Margo Natalie Crawford, *Black Post-Blackness: The Black Arts Movement and Twenty-First-Century Aesthetics* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

# Monthati Masebe

AI-Ancestral Intelligence:  
On Sacred Geometries,  
South African  
Cosmology, and the  
Rise of Ancestral Citation  
in Academia

*Phanda ndi tshivhoni tsha bvingwi*—‘the forehead is the mirror of the hidden’. This Tshivenda proverb comes from my native tongue and ethnic group. We are known as the mystical ones who never abandoned their spiritual roots, even when the colonizer came and told us our beliefs were demonic. Of course the reality looks vastly different, and like many South African Black families, assimilation, colonization, and internalized racism shaped the way we built values and ideologies in the home. I was among the fortunate ones who grew up inside of countless rituals and had access to ancestral interaction from very young. Whether sharing dreams, witnessing slaughters, or being told to walk through the house with a plate of burning sage to cleanse the space—connecting with the other world was innate and inevitable. I don’t remember ever being sat down and told what practices we do or don’t do; it’s always been more learn as you grow, and know which elders to contact if you have vivid dreams.

With age, my dreams began to escalate, as did my celestial gifts. What do you do as a young metropolitan westernized African with ancestral gifts and a calling asking you to tap into ancient wisdoms? We all know there are schooling systems where you go and learn divination and medicines and uncover your gifts. Artists are shown a path of healing through their art mediums, and I am one of those artists—but still, the tension between modern worlds that either blasphemize or ridicule your knowledge pools and active decolonial spaces

that seek to reform and to understand the psychospiritual neo-renaissance continues to trouble me.

My music and research curiosities began to centre around Indigenous knowledge systems, and I was pulled deeper and deeper into the spirit of *ubungoma*, the South African practice of spirituality and medicine by diviners, traditional healers, and the ancestral linkages known as Sangomas. I would try to sing one note and three would belch out, creating a throat-singing effect that I had only ever seen in my dreams. As the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa grew stronger in the mid 2010s, pressure was put on universities to decolonize their curricula. This meant that we went from learning purely western harmony in composition to learning how to build, compose for, and play Indigenous instruments from southern Africa. This broadened landscape could not have come at a better time.

True to the ancestral path, I began to meet more scholars who, like me, had a deep affinity for their craft, their research, and their ancestral calling. The modern-day shaman is not just sitting in a hut offering consultations to those in need. We are everywhere, inside of every profession, and our modes of healing are widespread. Pianist and composer Nduduzo Makhathini uses musicking as a ritual and takes a deep dive into the 'clashes between the precolonial imaginations and what the colonial period presented, and how much of that has

been absorbed into our system'.<sup>1</sup> He often describes his concerts as rituals, where audience members are simultaneously physically engaged in an Afrojazz concert and, in the same breath, he uses his ability to connect with the underworld to offer musical healing to the spirit body and send relief to the souls present. Makhathini went on to do his PhD at Stellenbosch University, becoming one of the first scholars to cite his ancestors and spirits as reputable sources of wisdom.<sup>2</sup> This groundbreaking decision and agreement meant that many more spiritual students like myself could weld two scholarships together into a world where we feel seen and complete as thinkers.

Masego Mogashoa, who is also the daughter to my spirit guide, completed her Master of Architecture at the University of Cape Town and made models of reimagined healing centres that merge western hospital facilities with Indigenous healing facilities. The designs place these sites near sacred rivers and mountains where healers take their clients for cleanses; at the same time, combining this approach with standard modern healthcare designs can provide holistic unity between these two worlds. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we

- 1 Nduduzo Makhathini 'Interview: South Africa's Nduduzo Makhathini on His Upcoming Blue Note Records Debut', interview by Nadia Neophytou, *okayafrica*. (6 March 2020), [okayafrica.com/south-african-jazz-nduduzo-makhathini-blue-note-interview](https://okayafrica.com/south-african-jazz-nduduzo-makhathini-blue-note-interview/).
- 2 Nduduzo Makhathini, *Breaking into Sound: Dis/Locating Ntu Cosmology and Improvisation in South African Jazz* (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2023).



saw a smaller scale of this unity in South Africa, with traditional healers joining forces with pharmaceutical companies to regulate treatments and incorporate the local herbs that have healed ailments for centuries—thus creating a space that can hold such multiplicity with geometries and directions, all guided by ancestral wisdom.

In all three examples we have the common thread of academic institutions welcoming and encouraging the sourcing of knowledge from our ancestors and validating that citation. The advancement of intellectualism that recognizes that formal methods of learning are not the root or prime basis of knowledge acquisition not only excites and inspires me but also indulges my curiosities about the diasporic conversations that form when institutions speak to one another, and when scholars connect abroad and transfer some of the normalized practices from the African continent into their research methodologies. My friend Sadé Jones is a scholar, a dancer, and a healer who has a similar approach to her practice, combining her background in psychology with her somatic embodiment practice and spiritual work. She is not from South Africa, but in many of our conversations about the breath, the body, and the gut, we have had many kindred moments. Meeting her made me realize the similarities in our conversations; I can sense these similarities in the way she weaves understandings of the body as a memory holder, and in the realization that, where language is lost in the tongue, it

lies passively in the body, and when activated, karmic invocations resurface. Sangomas, the healers in southern Africa, already know this, and know that bones carry fluids that flow centuries deep. That is why we use bones to transmit messages from the ancestors.

What's fascinating to me is the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge systems trickling into artistic craft, design spaces, and medicinal knowledge pools and academic institutions' direct response of providing space and platforms for this extensive research. In a world where technological pursuits evolve so fast, it is exciting to see a parallel rerooting of pre-colonial narratives. How do these worlds culminate in a new world, and how do we carve out our reflections with collective care and decentralized considerations? To truly feel and be seen in our wholeness, like the spirit of Ntu<sup>3</sup> proclaims?

3 As Makhathini explains in relation to his album *In the Spirit of Ntu* (2022): 'Ntu is an ancient African philosophy from which the idea of Ubuntu stems out. Ubuntu says: "I am because you are." It is a deep invocation of collectiveness.' And: 'The wise ones tell us that our essence is "force", what our ancestors called Ntu. ... Ntu is where our wholeness resides through-which we are connected to all. It is our spiritual essence that is untouchable for it is all and all is with/in it.' Nduduzo Makhathini, 'In the Spirit of Ntu', *Blue Note* (27 May 2022), [www.bluenote.com/spotlight/nduduzo-makhathini-in-the-spirit-of-ntu](http://www.bluenote.com/spotlight/nduduzo-makhathini-in-the-spirit-of-ntu).



*Pr ogramme*

# Talks and Panel Discussions



Mon., 4.11.2024

TALKS

18:30–19:30

Safi Faye Hall

## Always, Already There: Introduction and Welcome

*George E. Lewis, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung*

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Director and Chief Curator of Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), and *Always, Already There* guest curator George E. Lewis welcome participants and the general public to the residency of the International Contemporary Ensemble and several composers at HKW, outlining the historical and cultural reasons why this project was created and the manifold experiences on offer throughout the week.



Tue., 5.11.2024

TALK

18:30–20:00

Safi Faye Hall

## The Society of Black Composers

*Harald Kisiedu, introduction by George E. Lewis*

This talk illuminates the Society of Black Composers, a critically important yet largely unsung group of mostly New York-based African American composers from diverse musical backgrounds established in 1968. Situating the collective within its larger historical context, Kisiedu elucidates how these composers challenged fundamental assumptions about constructions of Western classical music as a historically and institutionally white space that leaves out Blackness.

See also: “One of the Wonders of African American Culture” on p. 42.

	<b>Wed., 6.11.2024</b>	<b>18:30–20:00</b>
	PANEL DISCUSSION	Safi Faye Hall

## Decolonizing Electronics

*Leila Adu-Gilmore, Jessica Ekomane, Cedrik Fermont,  
Corie Rose Soumah, Christina Wheeler,*  
moderated by *George E. Lewis*

As Cedrik Fermont writes in the programme notes for his performance for the residency, ‘Electroacoustic music rarely contains any political or socially engaged messages.’ An international panel of composer-performers with extensive roots in technological sound practices confront this and related issues, discussing the relation between their work and larger cultural and social contexts.

	<b>Thur., 7.11.2024</b>	<b>18:30–20:00</b>
	PANEL DISCUSSION	Safi Faye Hall

## African Art Music Today

*Nyokabi Karũki, Monthati Masebe, Njabulo Phungula,*  
moderated by *Andile Khumalo*

African composers of new and experimental musical forms discuss the state of African composition today—its present and future, both on the continent and beyond.

	<b>Fri., 8.11.2024</b>	<b>18:30–20:00</b>
	PANEL DISCUSSION	Safi Faye Hall

## Interdiscipline

*Douglas R. Ewart, Anthony R. Green, Satch Hoyt, Nyokabi Karũki, Elaine Mitchener,* moderated by *George E. Lewis*

Internationally renowned practitioners discuss their understanding and articulations of interdisciplinarity in their work, including its cultural, affective, and historical references and contexts.



Sat., 9.11.2024

16:00–17:30

PANEL DISCUSSION

Safi Faye Hall

# New Modes of Curation

*Daniele Daude, Cedrik Fermont, Satch Hoyt, Elaine Mitchener,*  
moderated by *George E. Lewis*

Many curatorial decisions are international, not local to one country. There is no reason why major institutions that tout themselves as cosmopolitan should continue to present non-diverse programmes. To do better, new experts are needed. This panel is composed of artist-curators who have created new ways of curatorial knowing and doing.



Sat., 9.11.2024

18:30–20:00

PANEL DISCUSSION

Safi Faye Hall

# Composing While Black I

*Anthony R. Green, Hannah Kendall, Monthati Masebe,*  
*Njabulo Phungula,* moderated by *Jessie Cox*

The first of two *Composing While Black* panels on Saturday and Sunday calls upon both established and emerging composers of the music of our time to discuss issues, techniques,

and cultural references in their work, with the aim of revealing Afrodiasporic new music today as an intercultural, multigenerational space of innovation that offers new subjects, histories, and identities.



Sun., 10.11.2024

18:30–20:00

PANEL DISCUSSION

Safi Faye Hall

# Composing While Black II

*Andile Khumalo, Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson, Alyssa Regent, Cofie Rose Soumah, Charles Uzor,* moderated by *Harald Kisiedu*

The second *Composing While Black* panel takes up the themes of the previous day's discussion. Composers from different backgrounds and generations discuss the differences and similarities in their respective approaches and their relevance to Afrodiasporic new music today.

# Concerts



Thur., 7.11.2024

20:30

Miriam Makeba Auditorium

## Decolonial Electronics

*International Contemporary Ensemble*  
with *Cedrik Fermont, Christina Wheeler, Satch Hoyt,*  
*Coïe Rose Soumah*

Music of: *Coïe Rose Soumah, Satch Hoyt,*  
*Levy Lorenzo & Fay Victor, Cedrik Fermont,*  
*Christina Wheeler*

## *Coïe Rose Soumah* States of Intermeshing: Smoke

(2024)

*Coïe Rose Soumah*, electronics

At the composer's request, there is no further information on this work.

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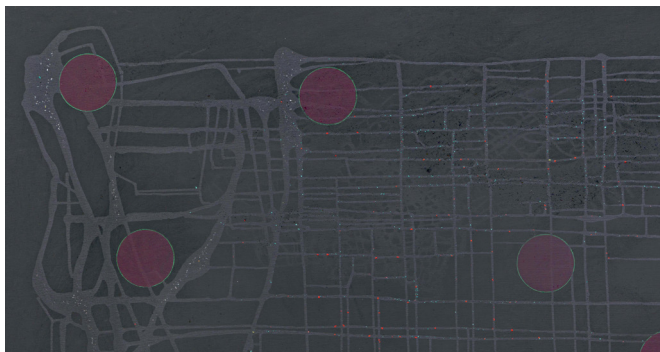
# Satch Hoyt

## Oblation Un–Muted

(2024, world premiere)

*Satch Hoyt*, electronics, video; *Joshua Rubin*, clarinet;  
*Jonathan Finlayson*, trumpet; *Jacob Greenberg*, keyboards;  
*Levy Lorenzo*, percussion

*Oblations Un–Muted* is one of my *Un–Muting: Sonic Restitutions* compositions, inspired by the various African instruments I have obtained temporary access to. Neither played nor exhibited, these abducted instruments have been incarcerated in various ethnographic museums for more than a century. Un–muting brings past sounding forms into the present—namely, instruments whose original role, among others, is to communicate with the *orishas* and the ancestors, offering a lens of sonic repair to the trauma of Africa’s colonial conquest and its further inequities in the transnational African diaspora. —Satch Hoyt



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# Levy Lorenzo & Fay Victor

## Modified

(2024)

*Levy Lorenzo*, electronics, percussion; *Fay Victor*, voice

*Modified* is a piece for self–engineered instruments and interactive electronics with manipulated acoustic percussion. Emphasis is placed on real–time playing and instrumental practice for a connected and embodied performance. The electronics system complements and modifies the performance of vocal improviser Fay Victor. —Levy Lorenzo & Fay Victor

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# Cedrik Fermont

## Point of Convergence

(2024)

*Cedrik Fermont*, electronics

Electroacoustic music rarely contains any political or socially engaged messages. *Point of Convergence* is an electroacoustic music piece whose main element is the voice, but one that expresses no clear opinion in order to not provoke the establishment and trigger its wrath.

In this composition, the voices cannot be understood. They speak a language that nobody knows, a constructed language whose role is the opposite of a lingua franca.

Or, is it? Charged with emotions, can these voices express and transmit certain feelings and push listeners to engage in a conversation about the content or the emptiness of this piece?

—Cedrik Fermont

# Christina Wheeler

## From the Quarter to the (W)Hole: A Prelude

(2024, world premiere)

*Christina Wheeler*, kora, Array mbira, balafon, electronics; *Fay Victor*, voice; *Joshua Rubin*, clarinet; *Rebekah Heller*, bassoon; *Jonathan Finlayson*, trumpet; *Caitlin Edwards*, violin; *Jacob Greenberg*, keyboard; *Levy Lorenzo*, percussion

Tonight, I extend an invitation to gather in community, to facilitate a space for us to consider and meditate on questions for enquiry: not for answering, but for observing that which is revealed. These questions revolve around Blackness, our place in the world and the universe as Black people, our relationship to our grief amid the chronic damage, destruction, and erasure that our endemic, racist societal systems wreak upon our lives as Black people, and how we activate efforts for freedom, dignity, grace, and sanctity for our Black lives. And how the physical vessels, the boats, throughout history to today, transport us, Black kin, from freedom, from oppression, to subjugation, to liberation, to life, and beyond.

—Christina Wheeler







Fri., 8.11.2024

20:30

Miriam Makeba Auditorium

# Composing While Black, Berlin Edition

International Contemporary Ensemble

Music of: *Alyssa Regent, Nyokabi Kariũki, Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson, Leila Adu-Gilmore, Coŕie Rose Soumah, Hannah Kendall, Andile Khumalo, Charles Uzor, Jessie Cox*

## Alyssa Regent Émergence

(2024, German premiere)

*Rebecca Lane*, flute; *Joshua Rubin*, bass clarinet;  
*Weston Olencki*, trombone; *Caitlin Edwards*, violin;  
*Rebekah Heller*, conductor

At the composer's request, there is no further information on this work.

# Nyokabi Kariũki The Colour of Home

(2021, German premiere)

*Levy Lorenzo*, percussion

	5'43"	5'45"	5'48"	5'50"	5'52"	5'55"	5'57"	6'00"	6'02"	
144	Tp.									
									fade out/slow down	END
LAPHARP	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP
	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP
	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP	HARP	IMPROV	LAP

The *Colour of Home* is a ten-minute audiovisual work inspired by three maternal figures in the lives of the work's collaborators: Nyokabi Kariũki (composer), Chris O'Leary (percussionist on fixed media), and Eucalyptus Segovia-Breaux (filmmaker). The maternal figures are from and were raised on different soils—Kenya, the Philippines, and El Salvador—but are connected by their stories of immigration to the United States.

'What colours remind you of home? What was the moment it first hit you that you'd left everything behind? And what do you hope for your children as they grow up here, in America?', you hear the interviewees being asked. They respond to these questions in their languages of Kikuyu, Tagalog, Spanish, and English, highlighting several things: their journeys and sacrifices

as immigrant parents, as well as how ‘home’ can have several meanings at once. —Nyokabi Kariūki

## Jalalu–Kalvert Nelson Rotations III

(2017/2021)

Joshua Rubin, bass clarinet; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet

This is the third work in my *Rotations* series, in which I combine improvisation with fully composed music. The clarinet has fully composed music, and the trumpet ‘rotates’ around it with improvised and composed music. —Jalalu–Kalvert Nelson

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Rotations III'. It features two main parts: Bass Clarinet and Trumpet in Bb. The score is divided into three systems. The first system is marked 'Bass Clarinet' and 'Trumpet in Bb' with a tempo of '♩ = 10 with a restless feeling'. The second system is marked 'B. Cl.' and 'Tr. in Bb' with a tempo of '♩ = 10'. The third system is marked 'B. Cl.' and 'Tr. in Bb' with a tempo of '♩ = 10 with'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

## Leila Adu–Gilmore Freedom Suite

(2014)

Damian Norfleet, voice; Joshua Rubin, clarinet;  
Rebekah Heller, bassoon; Caitlin Edwards, violin;  
Leila Adu–Gilmore, voice, piano

I wrote this song cycle from songs I had written over seven years in the United States. In 2020, this piece began to feel more relevant as I continued to live in a country and in a world that seems less united. The subject matter of the two songs selected for today’s programme, ‘Negative Space’ and ‘Ghost Lullaby’, are about police and environmental brutality through structural colonialism, and racism, exacerbated by monolithic western culture and education.

As my original programme note from 2014 explains:

For over half of my life, I have written, performed and recorded songs and improvisations for piano and voice. Attimes the accompaniment is very simple. In *Freedom Suite*, I have arranged three songs in different ways, with a goal of capturing their initial simplicity in different ways for each song. ... The second, ‘Ghost Lullaby’, is a song I wrote when I came to the town of Princeton, New Jersey, and realized that only a couple of people mentioned Native Americans, and that no one spoke of the tribe of people who inhabited the actual space that we lived on. The third, ‘Negative Space’, is a song I wrote upon hearing



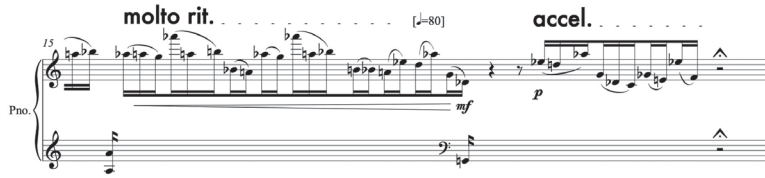
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# Andile Khumalo

## Schau-fe[r]n-ster II

(2014)

Jacob Greenberg, piano



*Schau-fe[r]n-ster II* is part of a series of piano works that explore different approaches to conceptualizing music for keyboard instruments. The title of this piano series comes from a combination of two German phrases, *Schaufenster* (display window) and *aus der Ferne schauen* (looking from afar). These two phrases lent a critical poetic significance to the compositions' development, showing different influences that shaped the compositional journey. The two phrases triggered the idea of detailed observation or enhanced sensitivity towards observation or listening. The composition draws strongly on the principle of using timbre as the foundation of musical composition, an approach common in the music of the Xhosa people of South Africa, which has rarely been highlighted. This piece is a profound exploration of the piano's versatility, serving as both a percussive and an orchestral instrument. The result is a unique blend of intimate sounds, delicately emerging from fading shades, creating new timbre surfaces that propel the music forwards. What I find particularly intriguing is how some movements

reference the interlocking techniques of African xylophone playing, further expanding the piano's sonic possibilities. In other movements (the third in particular), there are references to my African traditions. In some movements, this is combined and blurred with spectral influences from the French school of thinking about sound, but also complemented by the amaXhosa's approach to timbre. So, we hear a multilayered complexity of sound that projects a much bigger instrument than the piano. What is truly impressive is how the listener perceives sounds projected in space, giving an illusion of an ensemble work, creating an immersive and expansive experience for the audience. —Andile Khumalo

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## Charles Uzor

# Elegy for Marianne Schatz, for solo violin and electronics ad lib

(2024, German premiere)

Caitlin Edwards, violin; Charles Uzor, electronics

The story of my elegy is quite elegiac in itself. Marianne Schatz was a patron of music, whom I had known for many years. I kept seeing her rush past in contemporary music concerts—which amazed me because of her advanced age. It was said that she had money, which naturally kept me at a distance. For years, our communication was limited to a shy 'good evening'. Then I received her letter in which she asked me to set some poems to

music. They were the poems of her long-dead childhood sweet-heart, which she had rediscovered. Maybe just before forgetting, a discovery of what was important to her. I hesitated, but said yes. Then I had a hard time setting this lyric with the apocryphal images of humanity and nature into music. Fate took a sudden turn when, after just a few meetings, Schatz died without me being able to keep the promise of completing the composition in time. The elegy, written four years after her death, is a 'settlement of a score', the posthumous fulfilment of a promise, the testimony of an attraction that hovered over the hurdle of strangeness. The piece seems to me like the connection between a Black man and a white woman who left this earth in old age.

The sound material consists of simple, minimal gestures: at the beginning and at the end there are double stops with large intervals, in which perhaps Anton Webern can be heard. In the extended middle section, a flow of ascending four- to six-note motifs wash-

es over us, increasing in unpredictable algorithms to twelve-note permutations, whose underlying pulsation resembles the hocket rhythms of the Ba-Benzélé in Cameroon. At this point, in the middle of the piece, where the lullaby matches the pulse of the violin, I remember this strangely beautiful rhythm of a people who are foreign to me and ask myself: *what is (not) mine, who do I belong to (not)?* —Charles Uzor

## Jessie Cox (Noisy) Black/blackness (Unbounded)

(2024, world premiere)

Fay Victor, voice; Damian Norfleet, voice; Joshua Rubin, clarinet; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Levy Lorenzo, percussion; Caitlin Edwards, violin

In this piece, I engage the history of one-colour square paintings and its corollary in music. The history of black square paintings is bound up with questions of Black lives and blackness as abstraction. In the nineteenth century, Alphonse Allais painted a black square painting, *Combat de Nègres dans une cave pendant la nuit*. This racist joke is part of a claim over perception that holds the *other* in a square, authorizing a regime of truth, knowledge, interpretation, subject status, and more. Musically, the black square, or the one-colour square (Allais painted other one-colour squares as well), became a question of silence, particularly since it was Allais who wrote the first silent piece of music; John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) is the most

famous silent piece in music, and it is also a musical corollary to black square paintings and abstract painting in the twentieth century.

Of particular importance to my thinking of this history as a question of blackness is Charles Uzor's *8'46" George Floyd in Memoriam* (2020) which consists of two different kinds of silences: one with breathing sounds and one without any breathing sounds. Today, we might think of a continuation of this connection between the visual and aural in the digital realm: the concept of white noise (all frequencies equally present) and black noise (silence) in sound come from the visual, from photography, and from a mistaken understanding of the composition of white light.

For me, the question that arises by way of Black liveness is: What happens when this abstraction called 'blackness' breaks out of its confines and begins to redefine appearance, perception, sense, and meaning? It is an opacity introduced into a regime of absolute audibility that blackness bespeaks as the blurring of the distinction between audible and inaudible, sound and silence, abstraction and representation, object and subject, observer and artwork. This is a musical, or artistic, question that is also about who gets to speak, about who may have a voice. It is no coincidence that Black voices are erased and stolen at once, that Black sounds are erased and demonized at once, that Black sounds must conform to an anti-black world to stake their claim of legitimacy. In this sense, Black lives' musicking, as the liveness of the abstraction in the square, as blackness's unboundedness, refigures the *whole world*.

—Jessie Cox

See also: 'Abstraction and Composing While Black' on p. 66.

# Sonic Networks: Music of Douglas R. Ewart

*International Contemporary Ensemble with Elaine Mitchener*  
*Elaine Mitchener, voice; Damian Norfleet, voice;*  
*Fay Victor, voice; Joshua Rubin, clarinet;*  
*Rebekah Heller, bassoon; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet;*  
*Jacob Greenberg, keyboards; Levy Lorenzo, percussion*

At the composer's request, there is no further information on this work  
The art of Douglas R. Ewart is featured on pp. 56–65.



Sun., 10.11.2024

20:30

Miriam Makeba Auditorium

# The Wide–Open Mouth

*Com Chor Berlin, directed by Shelly Phillips,  
Jessica Ekomane and International Contemporary Ensemble*  
Music of: Jessica Ekomane, Elaine Mitchener,  
Njabulo Phungula, Fay Victor, Anthony R. Green,  
Monthati Masebe, Shelly Phillips

## Jessica Ekomane

### nye

(2024)

*Jessica Ekomane, computer and synthesizer*

*nye* is the Zulu word for the number one, and the state of being alone. —Jessica Ekomane

# Elaine Mitchener

## bloodcirclesearwhistles

(2021, German premiere)

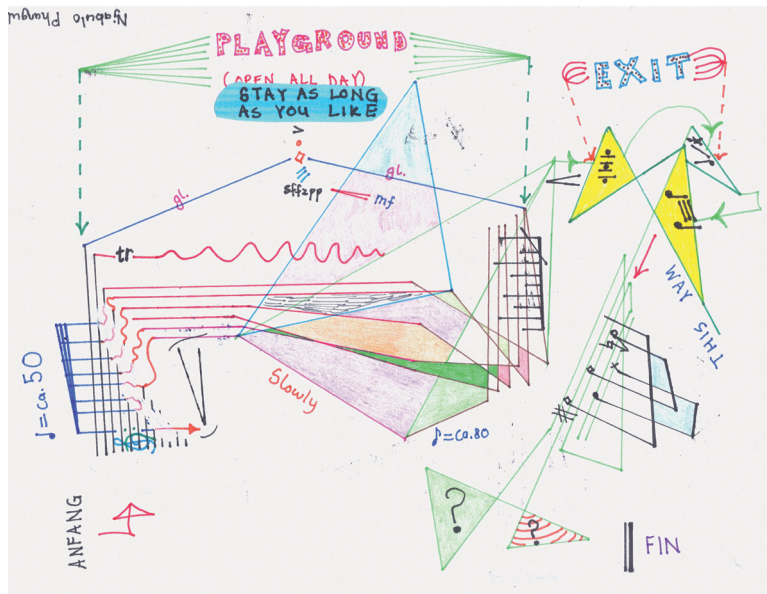
*Com Chor Berlin*

*bloodcirclesearwhistles* was composed in response to *On the Circulation of Blood*, a reference to William Harvey's key medical textbook of 1648, *De Motu Cordis*, from which artist Sam Belinfante created a mobile sculptural performance. The piece is for moving vocal ensemble and sports whistles and was composed as part of a larger collaborative commission with other composers and spearheaded by Belinfante. The score has a few basic instructions, and I also provide a vocal sample as a performance guide to an approach to the work. It is a spatial work, and for the listeners, an opportunity to engage with voices in direct yet intimate ways. Harvey's descriptive text has been fractured or deconstructed and serves as my humble tribute to poet and artist N. H. Pritchard, whose poems I have found deeply influential. —Elaine Mitchener

# Njabulo Phungula Playground Postcard

(2020, German premiere)

Rebekah Heller, bassoon; Caitlin Edwards,  
violin; Jacob Greenberg, piano



Playground postcard. Graphic score.  
Enter the playground. Play. Leave.  
—Njabulo Phungula

# Fay Victor Overlap/Seam

(2024, German premiere)

Fay Victor, conductor; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Jacob  
Greenberg, piano; Levy Lorenzo, percussion; Com Chor Berlin

*Overlap/Seam* is a piece of movement and 'self-conduction' for mixed ensemble. The work was developed as a piece for the participants of the Ensemble Evolution Alumni Celebration held at the New School in New York City in June 2024, where it was workshopped as a structured group improvisation using individual gestures shared in the collective space, using a motif that came from the ensemble to set things off. —Fay Victor

# Anthony R. Green Connections

(2021)

Rebekah Heller, bassoon; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Levy  
Lorenzo, percussion; Com Chor Berlin

When a body loses one of its senses (the ability to see, for example), the brain readjusts its connectivity to strengthen the other senses. In essence, it makes new connections in different ways. If one views humanity as a body, then 2020 was a year when the body of humanity was severely deprived of a major sense: its main mode of connection—physical interaction. Yet the collective brain



reconfigured itself, and humanity strengthened connections in different ways. Humanity collectively released a silent message: connections are important and necessary for sanity, growth, development, existence. *Connections* is an acknowledgement of this collective statement. This work was commissioned and premiered by the 113 Composers Collective and subsequently performed for the 2024 MATA Festival in New York.  
—Anthony R. Green

My connection  
My connection to  
My connection to you  
My connection to you is  
My connection to you is getting  
My connection to you is getting stronger  
My connection to you is getting weaker  
My connection to you is getting  
My connection to you is  
My connection to you  
My connection to  
My connection  
My

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## *Monthati Masebe* **Manzini**

(2024, world premiere)

*Damian Norfleet*, voice; *Fay Victor*, voice; *Caitlin Edwards*, violin; *Jacob Greenberg*, keyboards; *Levy Lorenzo*, percussion; *Rebekah Heller*, conductor

This piece explores the organic intertwining of gesture, rhythm, and speech found in African languages. African polyrhythms are often explored through a Eurocentric lens, and I wanted to take this opportunity to draw upon Kofi Agawu's methodologies on rhythm and speech. *Manzini*, which in Zulu means 'large bodies of water', opens us up to the fluidity of language and the human body as a large body of water, constantly treading life and all its cumbersome encounters. —Monthati Masebe

See also: 'AI—Ancestral Intelligence' on p. 74.

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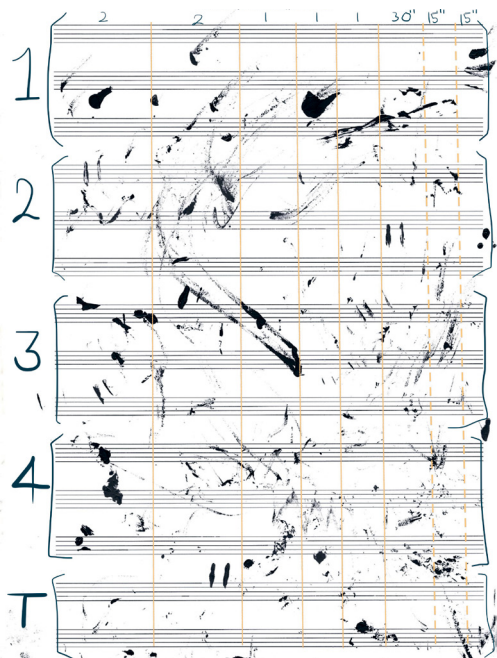
## *Elaine Mitchener* **th/e s/ou/nd be/t/ween**

(2023, German premiere)

*Fay Victor*, voice; *Damian Norfleet*, voice; *Rebekah Heller*, bassoon; *Joshua Rubin*, clarinets

*th/e s/ou/nd be/t/ween* was commissioned by British ensemble the Hermes Experiment and premiered on 24 September 2023

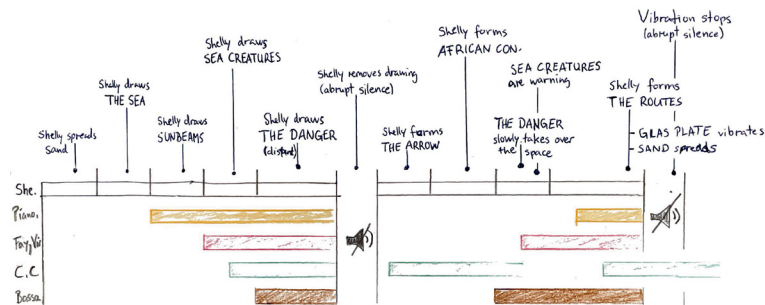
in the Purcell Room at the Southbank Centre, London. The material consists of a single-page graphic score that carries indications of timing, with ever shorter segments, for a total duration of ten minutes. I find graphic notation to be an effective method to uncover new possibilities in instrumental performance (including, of course, the voice) and to free the imagination in seeking new ways of expression. The title of the piece offers a further stimulus to the players: 'The work requires an openness to search for the sound(s) between.' —Elaine Mitchener



# Shelly Phillips G(r)ain

(2024, world premiere)

*Damian Norfleet*, voice; *Fay Victor*, voice; *Rebekah Heller*,  
bassoon; *Jacob Greenberg*, keyboards; *Com Chor Berlin*



*G(r)ain* is a piece composed by Shelly Phillips and the Com Chor Berlin that draws parallels between one of the most wanted raw materials worldwide and the African diaspora. —Shelly Phillips



## Leila Adu-Gilmore

Leila Adu-Gilmore is a composer, musician, and Assistant Professor of Music Technology at New York University where she founded the Critical Sonic Practice Lab. Her music moves at the intersection of electropop, avant-classical, and singer-songwriter practice. Exploring her roots in New Zealand/Aotearoa, Britain, and Ghana, Adu-Gilmore has released five acclaimed albums and has performed at festivals and venues across the world. Her credits include Ojai Music Festival, California; Bang on a Can, New York; the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra; and *Late Night with David Letterman*. She holds a PhD in Music Composition from Princeton University, New Jersey, and was awarded a Charles Ives Composer Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2022. Adu-Gilmore lives and works in New York.

## Com Chor Berlin

Com Chor Berlin is a choir project for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour. It was founded in 2013 by Daniele G. Daude and is currently under the musical direction of Shelly Phillips. The project was created out of the desire to promote the networking of BIPOC communities and to make music together without sheet music. The choir sings songs by BIPOC composers that are suggested by the members. Through its concerts, it aims to

reach people who see themselves as part of Berlin's migration-influenced, diversifying cultural and everyday practices, offering them the potential for identification and participation.

The members of Com Chor Berlin include:

Shelly Phillips, conductor  
Maame Appiah-Nuamah  
Khouloud Bidak  
Miriam Bui  
Nilda Cebiroğlu  
Peti Costa  
Silvia Dehn  
Desirée Desmarattes  
Ly-Gung Dieu  
Denise Ekale Kum  
Gizem Eza  
Nuran El-Mahgary  
Ghasal Falaki  
Lee Modupeh Anansi Freeman  
Delisha Farley Garmon  
Christelle Gebhardt  
Brenda Geckil  
Saphira Lopes  
Daniela Pepra  
Jonsaba Touray  
Lefora Williams

## Jessie Cox

Jessie Cox is Assistant Professor of Music at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition from Columbia University, New York. Active as a composer, drummer, and scholar, his work thematizes questions at the intersection of Black studies, music and sound studies, and

critical theory. Cox has worked as a composer and drummer with ensembles and institutions such as the Sun Ra Arkestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Klangforum Wien, Vienna, and at festivals such as Lucerne Festival; MaerzMusik, Berlin; and Opera Omaha, Nebraska. His monograph *Sounds of Black Switzerland: Blackness, Music, and Unthought Voices* will be published in 2025. Cox lives and works in Boston.

## Daniele G. Daude

Daniele G. Daude is a scholar and dramaturge. Daude has a PhD in Theatre Studies from Freie Universität Berlin and a PhD in Musicology from Université Paris 8. They have been teaching at German and French universities since 2008 and were Visiting Professor of Performing Arts at the Campus Caribéen des Arts, Fort-de-France, Martinique. Daude founded the ensemble the String Archestra to promote and perform works by Black, Indigenous, and composers of colour who have been erased from a canonical musical historiography and a standardized concert repertoire. They have been working as a lecturer, curator, and dramaturge for concert, opera, and theatre since 2016.

## Jessica Ekomane

Jessica Ekomane is an electronic musician and sound artist. She studied art history at the University of Tours, and sound

studies and generative art at Berlin University of the Arts. She creates situations where sound acts as a transformative element for the space and the audience. Ekomane's works are grounded in questions such as the relationship between individual perception and collective dynamics and the investigation of listening expectations and their societal roots. Her work has been presented in venues, contemporary art spaces, and museums across the world, including Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; KANAL – Centre Pompidou, Brussels; Art Basel; and CTM Festival, Berlin. Ekomane lives and works in Berlin.

## Douglas R. Ewart

Douglas R. Ewart is a composer, improvising multi-instrumentalist, conceptual artist, philosopher, writer, inventor, and more. He is a former Full Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Ewart bridges his kaleidoscopic activities by culture-fusing works that aim to restore the wholeness of communities and their members and to emphasize the reality of the world's interdependence. He is the founder of Arawak Records and the leader of ensembles such as the Nyahbingi Drum Choir, Quasar, the Clarinet Choir, and Douglas R. Ewart & Inventions. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Jamaica Musgrave Silver Medal, one of his native country's highest cultural honours. Ewart lives and works in Minneapolis.

## Cedrik Fermont

Cedrik Fermont (also known as C-drík, Kirdec, and Cdrk) is a composer, musician, mastering engineer, author, radio host, concert organizer, independent researcher, and label manager at Syrphe. His artistic creations encompass sound art, electroacoustic compositions, noise, industrial, free improvised music, and club genres like electronica, electro, and acid. He has played a pivotal role in various musical projects and collaborations, as a member of groups such as Axiome, Tasjil Moujahed, and Ambre. He has worked alongside many musicians and singers and has played concerts across Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas. Fermont lives and works in Berlin.

## Anthony R. Green

Anthony R. Green is a composer and performer invested in social justice artistry. Green's practice of continuous questioning and lifelong study is centred on epistemological hyperbole, the embodiment of injustice, and the metaphysics of the oppressed. Green's projects have been presented in venues in over twenty-five countries, including Spike Gallery, Berlin; Yehudi Menuhin Forum Bern; and TivoliVredenburg, Utrecht. Green has received degrees from Boston University and the New England Conservatory, Boston, and is currently Visiting Professor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland,

Glasgow, and on the faculty of the Cortona Sessions for New Music.

## Satch Hoyt

Satch Hoyt is a spiritualist and a believer in ritual and retention. He is a visual artist and a musician, and his work includes sculpture, sound installation, painting, musical performance, and musical recording and is united in its investigation of the 'Eternal Afro-Sonic Signifier' and its movement across and amid the cultures, peoples, places, and times of the African Diaspora. Selected exhibitions and projects include *Un-Muting – Sonic Restitutions*, MARKK Museum am Rothenbaum, Hamburg, 2024, and Afro-Sonic Mapping, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2019. Hoyt lives and works in Berlin.

## International Contemporary Ensemble

The International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), now in its twenty-first year, is a multidisciplinary collective of musicians, digital media artists, producers, and educators committed to building and innovating collaborative environments in order to inspire audiences to reimagine how they experience contemporary music and sound. The Ensemble's notion of 'polyaspora' is intercultural, intermedial and interdisciplinary,

as well as conscious, collaborative, creolized, and connected, across borders of aesthetics, practices, gender, ethnicity, race, and nation. By honouring the diversity of human experience and expression by commissioning, developing, recording, and performing the works of living artists, ICE proposes a new consciousness and a new identity for new music. The Ensemble has given performances at Warsaw Autumn and Berliner Festspiele, as well as in venues such as the Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam; Cité de la musique, Paris; and Carnegie Hall, New York.

The members of the collective include:

Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet  
Jacob Greenberg, piano  
Rebekah Heller, bassoon and conductor  
Levy Lorenzo, percussion, electronics  
Joshua Rubin, clarinets  
Fay Victor, voice  
Guest musicians for *Always, Already There*:  
Caitlin Edwards, violin  
Rebecca Lane, flute  
Damian Norfleet, voice  
Weston Olencki, trombone

## Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson

Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson is a composer and trumpet player. He studied at Indiana University, Bloomington, with John Eaton and Iannis Xenakis, and

at the Berkshire (now Tanglewood) Music Center, Lenox, Massachusetts, with Gunther Schuller and Jacob Druckman. He has received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and the inaugural John W. Work III Composer's Fellowship. His commissions include works for the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, the Dale Warland Singers, José Limón Dance Company, Studio Dan, Glow Quartet, and the Broken Frames Syndicate. Recent works have premiered at Lucerne Festival Forward, Luzern Summer Festival, Wien Modern, Rainy Days Festival. Nelson lives and works in Biel, Switzerland.

## Nyokabi Kariũki

Nyokabi Kariũki is a composer, sound artist, and artistic researcher. Her sonic imagination spans various genres, from classical contemporary to experimental electronic music, and encompasses explorations in sound art, pop, film, (East) African musical traditions, and more. She performs with the piano, voice, electronics, and several instruments from the African continent. Kariũki's EP *peace places: kenyan memoires* (2022) and her debut album, *FEELING BODY* (2023), were critically acclaimed by the press. She seeks to create meaningful and challenging art, illuminated by a commitment to the preservation of and reflection on African thought, languages, and stories. Kariũki lives and works in Nairobi.

## Hannah Kendall

Hannah Kendall is a British composer. She has worked with ensembles such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and LA Phil and her festival appearances include the BBC Proms, London; Berliner Festspiele; and Donaueschinger Musiktage. Kendall studied music at the University of Exeter before completing a master's in advanced composition at the Royal College of Music, London, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Composition at Columbia University, New York. Her music is published by Ricordi (Berlin). She received the Hindemith Prize for outstanding contemporary composers in 2022 and the Ivor Novello Award for Best Large Ensemble Composition in 2023. Kendall lives and works in New York and London.

## Andile Khumalo

Andile Khumalo is a senior lecturer in music theory, orchestration, and composition at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Composition from Columbia University, New York. His compositions have earned him the reputation of being one of the most widely performed African composers, evidence of his profound understanding and mastery of music. Khumalo's music is a testament to his exploration of diverse African traditions,

transcending his native region of Southern Africa. His compositions are deeply personal, reflecting his social context and vision for an inclusive reimagining of African music in the twenty-first century. Khumalo lives and works in Johannesburg.

## Harald Kisiedu

Harald Kisiedu is a historical musicologist, author, and saxophonist. He received his PhD in Historical Musicology from Columbia University, New York. His writings have appeared in *The Wire*, *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, and *Critical Studies in Improvisation*, among other publications. He has taught at the University of Music and Theatre Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Leipzig, University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, and the British and Irish Modern Music Institute Hamburg. As a saxophonist, Kisiedu has performed with Branford Marsalis, George E. Lewis, and Henry Grimes, among others. He is the author of *European Echoes: Jazz Experimentalism in Germany, 1950–1975* (2020) and the co-editor (with George E. Lewis) of *Composing While Black: Afrodiasporic New Music Today* (2023). Kisiedu lives and works in Hamburg.

## George E. Lewis

George E. Lewis is a composer, musicologist and trombonist. He is Professor of American Music at Columbia University, New York, and Artistic Director of the International Contemporary Ensemble. He is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, the Akademie der Künste Berlin, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a corresponding member of the British Academy. He is a MacArthur Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a recipient of the Doris Duke Artist Award. He is widely regarded as a pioneer of interactive computer music. Lewis lives and works in New York.

## Monthati Masebe

Monthati Masebe is a sound artist, composer, actor, and healer. Their approach offers a novel perspective on contemporary classical music with fusions of South African Indigenous sounds and electronic music. They incorporate ethereal vocalizations with their distinctive throat singing and emphasise on curated rituals that pay homage to their healing practices. Masebe is currently pursuing a PhD at Duke University with a focus on orchestrating African folk instruments and exploring inclusive notations. As an actor, Masebe is pioneering non-binary representation on the South African

TV show *Generations: The Legacy*. Masebe lives and works in Durham, North Carolina.

## Elaine Mitchener

Elaine Mitchener is a vocalist, movement artist, and composer. She works between contemporary and experimental new music, free improvisation, and visual art. Mitchener is currently a Wigmore Hall Associate Artist, was a DAAD Artist-in-Residence Fellow, and an exhibiting artist in the *British Art Show 9*. In 2022, Mitchener was awarded an MBE for Services to Music. Her debut album *SOLO THROAT* was released in 2024 on Café Oto's OTORUKO label. Her collaborators include: composers George E. Lewis, Tansy Davies, Laure M. Hiendl; visual artists Sonia Boyce, Christian Marclay, and The Otolith Group; chamber ensembles Apartment House, Ensemble Klang, MAM.manufaktur für aktuelle musik, London Sinfonietta, and Klangforum Wien; choreographer Dam Van Huynh and experimental musicians Moor Mother, Pat Thomas, and David Toop. Mitchener is founder of the collective electroacoustic unit the Rolling Calf. Recent festival appearances include Ilan Volkov/ BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's Tectonics Festival, Glasgow, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra; MaerzMusik, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Radialsystem V, Berlin. Mitchener lives and works in London.

## Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

Prof Dr Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung is a curator, author, biotechnologist and the director and chief curator of Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin and the 36th Bienal de São Paulo. He is the founder and was artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary Berlin, 2009–22; artistic director of sonsbeek 2020–24, Arnhem, 2020–22; artistic director of the 14th Rencontres de Bamako, Mali, 2022; curator of the Finnish Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019; guest curator of the Dakar Biennale of Contemporary African Art, 2018; and curator-at-large of documenta 14, Athens and Kassel, 2017.

## Njabulo Phungula

Njabulo Phungula is a composer. His music documents the exploration of convoluted forms, inspired by the concepts of time, memory, gesture, and the creative process itself. His works have been performed in South Africa, Germany, the US, and the UK by ensembles such as ensemble recherche, Kompass Ensemble, and the JACK Quartet. Phungula has received commissions and grants from several institutions and his works have been featured at the Unyazi Electronic Music Festival, Cape Town, and at the SASRIM Composers' Meeting, South Africa; Deep Time, Edinburgh; and ISCM World New Music Days.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, where he studied composition. Phungula lives and works in Durban.

## Alyssa Regent

Alyssa Regent is a composer from the archipelago of Guadeloupe. She is inspired by what she calls 'the unseen', seeking to evoke passions and sensations that are deeply rooted in introspection. She harvests from the ethereal, enigmatic intersections between music and spirituality. Regent has participated in several music festivals and programmes, such as the 77th Composers Conference at Avaloch Farm Music Institute, Boscawen, New Hampshire; String Quartet Evolution at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada; New Music on the Point, Leicester, Vermont; and the Lucerne Music Festival. She was awarded the ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Award in 2023. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Music at Columbia University, New York, and is the curator of Comparing Domains of Improvisation. Regent lives and works in New York.

## Corie Rose Soumah

Corie Rose Soumah is a composer currently based in New York. She is interested in shaping fractured and reconstructed sound components through hyper-collages and visceral

physical gestures. Her approach is characterized by a keen interest in the interweaving of multiple aesthetic and sonic elements from the perspective of Afro-diasporic geologies. Soumah is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition at Columbia University, New York. She completed a Bachelor of Music in instrumental composition from the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal. Her works have been performed by several ensembles and performers in Canada, the US, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy.

## Charles Uzor

Charles Uzor is a composer and musician. After studying in Switzerland, he followed the oboist Gordon Hunt for postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he also studied composition with H.W. Henze. Uzor's oeuvre focusses on pieces with ensemble and voice. Recent works, such as *846" George Floyd in Memoriam* (2020), *Mother tongue* (2021) on the loss of language, and *merrusch* (2023) on boat refugees strengthen Uzor's political positions. *The Great Wall. a labyrinth*, based on texts by Franz Kafka and Lu Xun is premiered in November 2024 by the vocal ensemble Ekmeles, his opera *Leopold II. exhibit* is forthcoming. Uzor is a fellow of the Civitella Ranieri Foundation. His work has been published by Neos and col legno. Uzor lives and works in St. Gallen, Athens, and Sifnos.

## Christina Wheeler

Christina Wheeler is a composer, vocalist, musician, and multimedia artist. Her creative practice focuses on electronics and technology. Wheeler blends a mix of structured and improvised electronic music and sound design from voice, sampler, theremin, QChord, autoharp, and Array mbira. Recent commissions include *Bang on a Can*, New York; *MaerzMusik*, Berlin; and *CTM Festival*, Berlin. Releases include *That Was Then, This Is Now* (2021) and *Songs of S + D* (2022). Collaborators include Nicole Mitchell, Chris Abrahams, and Dudù Kouate. Wheeler presents immersive multimedia works and composes for numerous instruments, including the glass armonica, kora, and balafon. Wheeler lives and works in Berlin and Los Angeles.

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Ndikung**  
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Audiovisual Media Engineering

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Head of Event Engineering

**Jan Proest**  
Head of Audiovisual Media Engineering

**Qu Chang**  
Curator (Discursive Practices)

**Arno Raffainer**  
Managing Editor *heimaten* (Publication  
Practices)

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p. 6

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p. 7

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p. 49–55

Extracts from the score for *when flesh is pressed against the dark* (2024) by Hannah Kendall. Courtesy of Hannah Kendall

p. 57–65

Artworks by Douglas R. Ewart.  
p. 57: *8-gon. For Black Elk/Hehaka Sapa, the visionary and spiritual leader of the Oglala Lakota people*; p. 58: *Joy*

*Drum. For Carei Thomas and AACM members, Sherri Scott, and Rita Warford*; p. 59: *Really a Reel. For AACM members Amina Claudine Myers and Henry Threadgill*; p. 60: *Pin Spool The Rattle. For Kelan Philip 'Phil' Cohran, one of the founders of the AACM*; p. 61: *Rhythm Racket. For AACM members Afifi Phillard, Joseph 'Ajaramu' Shelton Jr./ Jerol Donavon, and Alvin Fielder*; p. 62: *Rim Shot Rhythm. For Wesley Tyus, Sura Dupart, King Mock, and AACM member Hamid Drake*; p. 63: *Roving Crutch. For AACM members Betty Dupree, Michael Danzy, and Kalaparusha Arah Dija Mawūce McIntyre*; p. 64: *Peace Dreams Chimes. For AACM members Wes Cochran, Vandy Harris, Sandra Lashley, and Rasul Saddik*; p. 65: *Herald. For AACM members John Shenoy Jackson, Malachi Moghoustut Favors, Lester Bowie, and Ameen Muhamed*. Courtesy of Douglas R. Ewart

p. 67–73

Extracts from the score for *(Noisy) Black/blackness (Unbounded)* (2024) by Jessie Cox. Courtesy of Jessie Cox

p. 90

Satch Hoyt, *Oblation. Dedicated to Greg Tate* (from the *Black Urban Grid* series), pigment and acrylic on canvas, 174 x 95 cm; photo: Trevor Lloyd Morgan. Courtesy of Satch Hoyt

p. 93

Collage of text fragments from the composition *From the Quarter to the (W)Hole: A Prelude* (2024) by Christina Wheeler. Courtesy of Christina Wheeler

p. 94

Extract from the score for *Émergence* (2024) by Alyssa Regent. Courtesy of Alyssa Regent

p. 95

Extract from the score for *The Colour of Home* (2021) by Nyokabi Kariūki. Courtesy of Nyokabi Kariūki

p. 96

Extract from the score for *Rotations III* (2021) by Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson. Courtesy of Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson

p. 99

Extract from the score for *Limpidités IV* (2022) by Corie Rose Soumah. Courtesy of Corie Rose Soumah

p. 100

Extract from the score for *Schau-fe[r]n-ster II* (2014) by Andile Khumalo. Courtesy of Andile Khumalo

p. 102

Extract from the score for *Elegy for Marianne Schatz* (2024) by Charles Uzor. Courtesy of Charles Uzor

p. 108

Graphic score for *Playground Postcard* (2020) by Njabulo Phungula. Courtesy of Njabulo Phungula

p. 110

Text by Anthony R. Green, 2021. Courtesy of Anthony R. Green

p. 112

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p. 113

Graphic score for *G(r)ain* (2024) by Shelly Phillips. Courtesy of Shelly Phillips

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