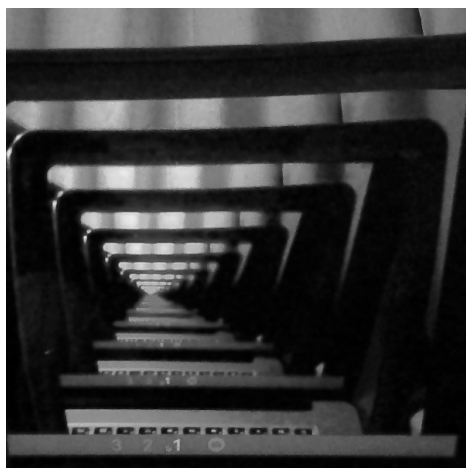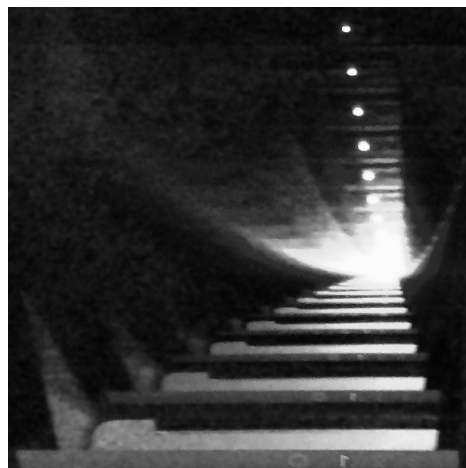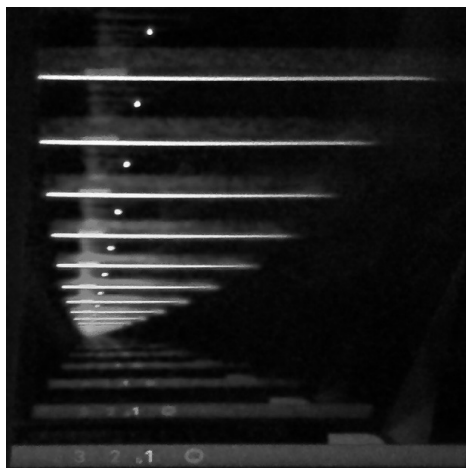# FEEDBACK: Self vs. Other

Saturday, July 10, 2021
7:00 PM
Center for New Music

presented by:

Brett Austin Eastman
and
Jessie Nucho

Program

if/else (2017)

Evan Williams

Passover (2020)
World Premiere

Brett Austin Eastman

deep breaths (2020)

Chelsea Loew

…for each person who gets stuck in time gets stuck alone (2015)

Jen Wang

Vanishing Points (2020/2021)
US Premiere

Phoebe Bognár

Program Notes

In various programming languages, conditional statements allow a program to make choices based on given data through simple Boolean logic. The most common of these is probably the if/then/else statement. An example of this logic is "If x is true, then do y. If else, do z."

While my own programming skills are limited, during my brief study of languages like C, C++, and Objective C, these conditional statements fascinated me on a philosophical and poetic level. Very complex code relies on these very simple pieces of logic. They also give the illusion that the computer or program has agency to make a "choice."

if/else is inspired by these programming statements. Each movement is inspired by programming logic, and uses the statement to influence the musical material, the live processing, or both. For example, in the opening movement "if/else," if the flutist plays the pitch E5 or higher, the electronics will react with a randomized effect, if the pitch is lower than E5, nothing will be triggered.

In "switch," the flutist and electronics trade between playing melodic and accompanying material, using high sustained pitches from the flute as a catalyst to switch roles. The movement "while" is concerned with immediate response. The electronics processes every sound from the flute in real time. The fourth movement "break" sets up intense layers of dissonant sounds until reaching a breaking point, and then restarting. The final movement, "else/if" serves as a short, quasi-palindromic coda to the work.

if/else was written for Lindsey Goodman.

-Evan Williams

The music of Evan Williams has been performed across the country and internationally by members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the International Contemporary Ensemble, Quince Ensemble, Fifth House Ensemble, and at festivals such as SEAMUS, and the New York City Electronic Music Festival. In addition, he has been commissioned by notable performers and ensembles including the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra, and many more. Williams holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, Bowling Green State University, and Lawrence University. Williams is the Assistant Professor of Music Composition/Technology and Director of Instrumental Activities at Rhodes College.

Passover is a part of a series of three works for flute exploring the concept of feedback. This work overall is about processing anxiety. It is a musical interpretation of a poem by Jessie Nucho written as a way of managing anxiety. The piece itself is the result of a feedback process: the words of a personal struggle, when transformed through another's lens, can evolve from their original meaning and become something new. The text of the original poem is reprocessed as music, then fed-back to its author, who performs the world premiere, thus reinterpreting the original work in an entirely new medium, and thus, in a different mindset. The audience reaction during performance represents the last form of feedback experienced in the process, allowing the performer to see a new self-reflection.

To achieve the text-to-music transcription, I started by using a cryptogram developed for the piece. In this cryptogrammic technique designed to transcribe text into melodic phrases, each letter in the alphabet corresponds to a specific musical pitch and duration. I also use a technique called aspirated articulation for recreating certain speech sounds, such as unvoiced fricatives "s," "t," etc. and eliding them with the next pitch, thus creating an artificial attack to the principle note, notated as a grace note right before the main note.

-Brett Austin Eastman

deep breaths is a variable piece that changes shape and duration each time it is performed based on the performer's choices in the moment. The piece focuses on the breath as gesture and is influenced by anxiety and its ability to spiral mentally and physically.

deep breaths was written for flutist Jessie Nucho and commissioned by the New Music on the Point 10th Anniversary Project funded in part by the Robert Black Foundation.

-Chelsea Loew

Composer, performer, and educator Chelsea Loew (b. 1992: Charleston, SC) is the recipient of two Fulbright research grants in composition and the Composer-in-Residence for the Taylor Festival Choir. Her works have been performed by Chór Narodowy Forum Muzyki, Yarn/Wire, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, members of Talea Ensemble, Popebama, Altered Sound Duo, Siroko Duo, Tony Arnold, and others. Festivals featuring her music include Sacrum Profanum at Play Kraków, the Composers Conference at Brandeis, the National SCI Composers Conference, the Ball State New Music Festival, New Music on the Point, the Oregon Bach Festival, Southern Division American Choral Directors Association, Piccolo Spoleto, and the European American Musical Alliance. Her work emphasizes the emotional and personal, and it often explores the relationship, both constructive and damaging, between language and intended expression. Chelsea is a member of the modular, technologically focused experimental group Ensemble Decipher, and she is also a core member alto of the Taylor Festival Choir. She hold degrees from Stony Brook University (Ph.D.), Eastman School of Music (M.A.), and College of Charleston (B.A.).

…for each person who gets stuck in time gets stuck alone is inspired by Einstein's Dreams, a series of fictional vignettes by Alan Lightman that entwine the theory of relativity with people's subjective, relative, and emotional experiences of time. The piece may be performed by an ensemble of flutists or by a solo flutist with pre-recorded versions of themself; in both instances, each line moves through similar material, converging and diverging from the others in time and tuning. The result is an echo chamber of sorts, a space in which ideas reverberate and replay with only minor changes, a dense kind of solitude.

-Jen Wang

Jen Wang is a composer interested in our subjective perceptions of time, relationships, and memory, sometimes drawing on the manipulation of pre-recorded sounds, the use of flexible time frames in performance, and the exploration and creation of unconventional timbres and techniques for musicians. She has composed for C3LA (Contemporary Choral Collective of Los Angeles), Transient Canvas, and mezzo-soprano Megan Ihnen in recent years, and has projects forthcoming with soprano Laura Dixon Strickling and cello/soprano duo Mazumal. She is currently co-director of People Inside Electronics, a Los Angeles concert series dedicated to electroacoustic music.

Vanishing Points is about arrival and departure. It is a consideration of the evanescence of place, being and identity, not always relative to tie. In the past year I have encountered several versions of departure, and in turn the arrivals of other things—new thoughts, understandings and imaginings. When multiple 'plains' exist, and when they meet do they converge into unity? Or do they still exist as separate voices, under the same skin?

-Phoebe Bognár

Phoebe Bognár is a Australian-born flutist, composer and improviser, presently based in Basel. Her approach to creativity is sewn with vibrancy and fluidity, and explores a diverse range of genres, repertoire and styles. Her artistic practice has been shared with music with audiences in Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Finland and the United States of America. She is passionate about collaboration across genres, art forms and disciplines and delving into new and exciting ways of creative expression. The use of the voice, gesture, electronics, visuals and activism are central to her creative practice and projects. Through art, Phoebe endeavors to weave new connections and understandings– to each other and the world we live in.

San Francisco-based flutist Jessie Nucho is passionate about sharing both traditional and contemporary music as a chamber musician, soloist, and educator. She performs regularly with the new music ensembles After Everything and Ninth Planet, where she also serves as Co-Artistic Director. She is a founding member of Siroko Duo, a flute duo dedicated to commissioning and presenting new works in creative spaces. As a soloist, Jessie has performed at San Francisco's Center for New Music, the Berkeley Arts Festival, the Hot Air Music Festival, and the Legion of Honor. Jessie holds an MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Tim Day. Previous instructors include Alberto Almarza and Jeanne Baxtresser at Carnegie Mellon University.

Brett Austin Eastman is a composer, producer, teacher, and performing musician, whose music has been performed by Yarn/Wire and Del Sol String Quartet. He has composed works for pianist Tingyuan Luo, Slow Wave, Keyed Kontraptions and Siroko Duo, as well as a quartet he put together for a concert he produced titled "Punk in Times of War." In 2019, he co-produced and curated a concert with the ensemble Slow Wave, featuring new music for viola, clarinet, and piano. In January 2020, he co-produced a concert with Jessie Nucho entitled "FEEDBACK: In Response," featuring music for flute and electronics literally and conceptually inspired by different forms of feedback. He did sound design for and co-wrote (with Jon Raskin) the score for the feature-length film, "The Murder of Hi Good," by filmmaker Lee Lorenzo Lynch. He studied composition with Richard Festinger, Josh Levine, and Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez.

Learn more:

centerfornewmusic.com

brettaustineastman.com

jessienucho.com

phoebebognar.com

chelsealoew.com

jenwang.com

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Thank you:

Center for New Music
Brent Miller
Julie Barwick
Leslie & Roger Nucho
Emma Logan
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Tim Sherren