

Ashley Fure
Something to Hunt

International Contemporary Ensemble
Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra

Rebekah Heller
Brandon Lopez
Nate Wooley

1. Shiver Lung for ensemble and electronics (2016) 11:58

International Contemporary Ensemble
Alice Teyssier and Lucy Dhegrae - voice
Ryan Muncy - saxophone
Rebekah Heller - bassoon
Ross Karre - percussion
Levy Lorenzo - percussion and electronics
Mariel Roberts - cello

2. Soma for Sextet (2012) 10:12

International Contemporary Ensemble
Carlos Aguilar - piccolo
Campbell MacDonald - bass clarinet
Ross Karre and Nathan Davis - percussion
Cory Smythe - piano
Mariel Roberts - cello
David Fulmer - conductor

3. Something to Hunt for septet (2014) 11:07

International Contemporary Ensemble
Campbell MacDonald - clarinet
Stuart Breczinski - oboe
Ryan Muncy - saxophone
Joahua Modney - violin
Wendy Richman - viola
Mariel Roberts - cello
Greg Chudzik - bass
Ross Karre - conductor

4. Soma for Sextet (2012) 10:12

International Contemporary Ensemble

Carlos Aguilar - piccolo

Campbell MacDonald - bass clarinet

Ross Karre and Nathan Davis - percussion

Cory Smythe - piano

Mariel Roberts - cello

David Fulmer - conductor

5. Library on Lightning for Trio (2018) 14:34

Nate Wooley - trumpet

Rebekah Heller - bassoon

Brandon Lopez - double bass

5. Bound to the Bow for orchestra and electronics (2016) 17:35

Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra

Ashley Fure: Something To Hunt

It feels false to call this release the music of Ashley Fure, because the world Fure creates is experientially so much more than what can be contained in a sound file, an illuminating text, a set of remembrances. Her work is tactile and sensuous. Her performances are collected by her audience like haptic memory objects. They encompass ideas that transcend a combination of frequencies or a mapping of sound. Her compositions are as close to a microcosm of life as I've ever experienced.

This document is a good example of how Fure's work propagates. It is historical in that the music contained within spans the earlier part of her, still early, career and is the representation of a way of working that is only a portion of her current work as she favors larger and more dramatic experiential moments over rigorous collection of chamber or orchestral acoustic and electronic sound. The pieces on this release, however, point us in this new direction as they feel as if they expand and explode our definition of chamber music. It is almost hard to believe, upon just listening, that these sounds could be the carefully constructed, notated, and articulated product of a single creative spirit. And yet, here we are, a voice in contemporary composition that will make us rethink what is possible.

This release is also an introduction or primer for those that, as of yet, have not been able to have the privilege of being a life experiencer of Fure's performances. Her compositions are not 'difficult' in the grand sense of modernity and the avant-garde—they are moving on a sonic level to those that have no education or interested in "modern" music. But, her work rewards the listener that seeks contextualization and knowledge. It is not static and, by learning more about the composer, we are able to find new

depths within it by keeping track of its movement.

On a personal note, it has been a long-term dream of mine and *Sound American* to be the one's presenting Ashley Fure's work to a broader public. It has taken a lot of time and care on the part of the composer, the incredible International Contemporary Ensemble, and all those involved in the production of the music and text. And, to that end, there has not been a single person involved that hasn't been working from a mindset of understanding the special nature of this music. With that, I say that we all hand it off to you—the listener, the experience, the friend—with hopes that it affects you as deeply as it has us.

Nate Wooley-Editor, *Sound American Publications*

The Music of Ashley Fure in the Time of Isolation

Zachary Woolfe

It hasn't been easy, here and now, to listen to this album.

It's never been easy to listen to Ashley Fure's eerie, disturbing, intricate and always unraveling music. But certainly not in New York City in early April 2020, at a time when the light currents of anxiety that course along the underside of life, almost unnoticed, have become unavoidable reality. When the barely audible overtone suddenly, without any warning, becomes the ambulance siren endlessly wailing, inside and outside our heads.

This is a time and a place when and where the very air seems to vibrate with threat; when our most intimate partners acquire a new aura of fascination and menace. After all, they might very well be the ones silently transmitting to us an invisible enemy.

It is a hard, hard time and place — unsettling and brutal and marked by both isolation and stubborn cohesion. And though it hasn't been easy to listen to this album, it is the very time and place for the artistry of Ashley Fure.

I felt that way even before the start of the crisis that currently engulfs us. Because even before this new crisis, we were in crisis. Fure is hardly the only artist to perceive this, but she's one of the few able to depict with keenness and subtlety the nature of the situation in which we've found ourselves this century.

Perhaps her masterpiece so far, a 2017 work about climate change, wasn't exactly about climate change. "The Force of Things," which she called an "opera for objects," was more precisely about the emotional impact, the permeating anxiety, of a mounting ecological crisis whose impact is simultaneously omnipresent and imperceptible.

Singers whispered ominously in a language we in the audience couldn't quite understand. Subwoofers made sounds too low-frequency for us to hear, but the waves they produced had material — and, indeed, musical — effect. Glacial and scary, the piece conjured the internal and external world in which we now live with far more acuteness than more overtly "political" compositions I've heard. "Filament," which opened the New York Philharmonic's season in 2018, featured an improvising choir whose members held outsize acoustic megaphones. There was something to announce, the spectacle promised; an emergency to be broadcast. But the voices were soft whooshes and moans, sounds heard more through the skin than through the ears. It was an emergency without a siren, without a scream.

"Shiver Lung," from 2016 and on this album, consists of material drawn from "The Force of Things." The singers have megaphones here, too — and electronic ones, unlike in "Filament," but the sounds coming out of them are still only faint sighs. In a live performance, part of the drama of this work — and all Fure's music — is the tension between the sight of the performers' effort and the audible results; on a recording, the effect is like being blindfolded. It adds another layer of unease to what is already uneasy music. The listener is aware of a perception that isn't quite a perception; an anxiety so slow-burning that it's barely there; invisible causes and ambiguous effects; an electronic oscillation that evokes a helicopter heard

from miles away. The force of things, yes, but often the nearly invisible force of invisible things.

But even as it skirts invisibility, this music is never retiring. There is grandeur in a voice that is trying to speak — “flapping without flight,” as Fure writes of one of her pieces, “clawing towards tone, trying to rise.”

That persistent sense of nobility in the very effort of expression is the connective tissue between what I think of as Fure’s political, or social, works, and the ones that she has identified as more intimately personal. The ones, especially, that she says are inspired by her grandmother, who suffered from Parkinson’s disease.

Among these, there is “Therefore I Was,” from 2012; Fure has written that this music is defined by “the crisis I watched my grandmother endure”: a tension between stillness and anxious, abrupt aggression. The critic Steve Smith has written that its “agonized gestures, halting pace and tense silences denoted courage and ineffable dignity.”

Also in this group is “Soma,” also from 2012, for sextet and on this album, which explores what Fure calls the “disconnect between psychological intent and physical execution.” Things are happening, but you don’t know what; you can’t quite control the link between cause and effect. Yet beneath the jitteriness, the swift fractures, is a slight piercing of the inner ear; the thing you hear but can’t be sure you’re hearing; the sense of sensing. And then, again, that sense of ineffable dignity: near the end, finally, a passing oasis of consonant calm.

It might go without saying that, even more than most music, it isn’t ideal to

hear these pieces on a recording. Even Fure's "purely" musical works are essentially installations; the "agonized gestures" Smith describes are both audible and physical. Interestingly, as Fure was just starting out as a composer, it was working with electronics — which you'd think of as less visceral — for her first commission that brought her music finally alive. "All of a sudden," she told David Allen of The New York Times, "with a microphone, that tactile link jumped right back into my work. With microphones in a room, bowing on cardboard, using metal on glass, using my hands and my ears in a direct feedback loop, that link immediately reconnected itself. Honestly, that's when my music was really born."

Blurriness between the player and what's played, between the spectacle of creating a sound and what actually reaches a listener, is key for her: "We're trained to hear melody," she said in that Times interview, "not fingernails on keys. The player behind these scores is in some ways invisible, subservient to the musical image that they produce. I'm interested in digging behind that veil, putting their exertion onstage."

That onstage exertion — and its presence or absence in what we perceive: Fure writes in one score that "dynamics in quotation marks indicate the intensity of a physical gesture and do not necessarily correlate to heard volume" — is obviously missing over headphones. But "Bound to the Bow," from 2016, is nevertheless bracing. Fure doesn't make the mistake of many composers who are relatively new to writing for full orchestra; she's preternaturally restrained. The sound world here is skittering, murmuring, with electronics like voices. The orchestra quivers, winds fluttering; there is always a sense of something lying beneath. Near the end a glistening takes over, like a golden river dripping with harps and percussion — a golden drizzle over which an airy haze spreads out. Is it sunrise or sunset? That is

the question.

Whether she is writing for symphony orchestra or for a trio — as in “A Library on Lightning” (2016), for Bb trumpet, bassoon and double bass — Fure’s pieces come across as environmental, yet shapely. “A Library,” a preparatory sketch for “Filament,” vibrates through a succession of loosely defined episodes, yet it makes sense, somehow feels like a narrative. Once again there is that recurring feature: a barely audible strand of harmonic from the double bass, nearly indistinguishable from a slight ringing in the ear, between grim grinding.

I say grim, and no, Fure’s music isn’t exactly uplifting. But deep in the scary septet “Something to Hunt” (2014), suffused with the feeling of craving, an almost jamboree spirit sets in — a nocturnal dance, animalistic but benign.

That dance, crucially, is something we take part in — players, audience — collectively. Fure once spoke to *The Times* about the oddness of concerts: If the music we hear is just sound waves traveling through the air, she said, then “we’re coming together to let air bump up against us. It’s a strange collective act.” Her music depends on that presence as a group, on a hair-trigger physical unity, on a togetherness that is the thing most directly threatened by the coronavirus.

Which makes listening to this recording in New York City in April 2020 both timely — I’ve done it in isolation — and poignant: It is a particularly acute reminder of all we’ve had to lose. But Fure has been timely for years, not weeks. Her music offers an evocation of anxiety that is nevertheless ruled by craft and precision and care and cohesion, the values that have long been under threat.

“We the hyper-mobile, hyper-privileged generation,” she has written of “Something to Hunt” (but which I read as a kind of manifesto), “saturated with choice and yet raised without the bedtime lies of progress, truth and tribal pride that guided so many before us. Our prey is pre-packaged; our gods are dead. So what do we search for? What do we hunt?”

What, in other words, is urgent? What do we want to preserve, what do we want to listen closely to, as the saps on our attention — the mindless noise — grow ever more nagging? What is the demand that calls, nearly silent, from the back of the mind in the dead of night? These questions haven’t arisen over the past month, but they’ve been sharpened there, and this music has been sharpening, too.

Ashley Fure's *Force of Things*

César Alvarez

The first time I walk into Ashley Fure's *The Force of Things: An Opera for Objects* I find myself encircled by a bunch of hanging blobs. Paper? Painters Plastic? Rubber? Latex? I wonder if they are wet. I wonder where I'm supposed to stand. There is no clear focal point or ideal frame of reference, only a question about how close I want to be to these diaphanous icebergs— I later learned to call them “hides,” and that every fold has been meticulously sculpted to create this exact ambiguity by Ashley's brother and collaborator, Adam Fure.

On the ground under each hide is a speaker cone, the face of which is about the size of a dinner plate. Each speaker, or subwoofer, sports a thin white rope extending vertically from its center, drawing a straight line up through the multi-layered cragginess of the hides. It seems so naughty to have plucked these subs out of their cabinets, and to have grafted stems onto them. The speakers start to bounce with sub-audio. The cables dance, slapping and animating the hides.

I remember taking the mesh covers off my first set of speakers to expose the dome of the subwoofer. I touched it sometimes in moments of rebellious curiosity, the way you might touch the surface of your eyeball just to see what will happen. The dome of the sub is like the black monolith in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is an ancient geometric imperative. It is beautiful but only concerned with its job: opening a portal on demand. It is a clue that the rectilinear architectures all around us aren't oriented toward the sonic. All those right angles are missing something about our body, about the water in us. Speaker cones point to the *unstraight*. The curved and queer texture of the saxophone and the gourd and the esophagus.

It sounds like rain. Eight cables slap the hides in phasing frequencies, building into a miraculously strange yet familiar sound. Sound designers in theater and film complain about how hard it is to mimic the sound of rain. If the source isn't spacialized and kinetic it ends up sounding like flat white noise. But, Ashley made the sound, and everything is shaking and no one knows where to stand and I feel my first twinge of joy. This is a recurring moment for me in Ashley's work: when a confounding alien feeling transmutes into the flint strike of a giggle.

After some time in this ring of vibrating hides, which Ashley calls the "Paper Prelude," two figures appear in what are now clearly openings, but before that moment seemed only like the continuous stalactite contours of the hides. The singers raise two small megaphones to their mouths, and sip a tiny packet of air in unison, which brings the loud fizzing of the hides to a whisper.

We stand in a new kind of time. We listen to the tiniest clicks and wet crackles of the singers mouths. More sips and expulsions. I'm reminded of Ashon T. Crawley's conception of breath: "Fleshiness" that tells us about the material of spirit.¹ Ashley asks the singers to let out breath in tiny strained fragments. The sounds are warnings about the loss of flesh. The melting of ice. The terrifying prospect of using up our good air.

The singers turn and we follow them through the openings into a cavernous space sliced longways by aircraft cables pinned and bridged across large styrofoam cubes and domes. I see more performers at stations working and sawing at their cords and horns and implements. A spine of five subwoofers split the center of the oblong space, each with a vertical cable beaming from its center.

This is unrecognizable theater. The sounds are shimmering and raking over me. I'm flooded with questions and unfamiliar sensations. I have to make

uncertain decisions about where to look, how to position my body, and which layer of sound to hone in on. The discomfort returns along with the euphoria of experiencing something so otherworldly and elemental. This is stunning and difficult.

The audience settles down scattered through the space for the next thirty-five minutes in contemplation of our time left on Earth, or the “hum of ecological anxiety” as Ashley often says. The piece asks us to listen with our whole (shared) body. Ashley wants us to hear sounds that we think we can't hear.

In working to open myself to the sound, I expand. I find my consciousness leaping out of my body. I find new ideas unearthed in my own psyche, and I don't know if Ashley implanted them or revealed them to me.

In the final gesture, the five performers stand around the speaker cones on the center spine and let the vertical “tripwires” dance in their hands. Ashley sits quietly on the periphery controlling (performing) the oscillations with a laptop. Her face is neutral, brow furrowed a little. She is looking for a coordination of the dancing wires that matches her enigmatic web of impulses and tastes. The performers move slowly in actual awe of the vibration that they are holding in their hands.

I wished I could touch sound. That's why I used to rest my fingers on the speaker cone. I wanted to touch Nirvana, and John Coltrane's Quartet. But now I know that the sound *is* touch, and the ultraviolet gift of Ashley's music is to be physically wrapped in her curiosity—to have it move through every cell. To experience *The Force of Things* is to be actually filled with Ashley's urgent questions about humanity and our future together. It is demanding, and awe-inspiring, and afterward I feel like my capacity to imagine expands outward, some immeasurable amount, in every direction.

1. Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics Of Possibility* (Fordham University Press, 2016)

You are Part of the Hive

Dahlia Borsche and Taïca Replansky

Hive Rise, Workshop Performance, Großer Wasserspeicher (Berlin)

July 18th, 2019, 7pm

A crowd gathers on the spacious sidewalk outside the large water tank in Berlin's Kollwitzkiez neighborhood. Covered by the grassy green carpet of the small park found atop, the massive old monument is barely noticeable aside from the sizeable and intriguing entrance gate hiding in the shadows. In front of this gate appears artist Ashley Fure, briefly addressing the crowd; tuning us into the performance and experience ahead, she asks for our unified attention.

What the crowd doesn't realize is that, at this moment, the piece has already begun. The roughly 250 people, who had been arriving alone, in pairs, and small groups, have become a temporary unit. While the information Fure gives about the piece and the particularities of the space we are about to enter is important, her real message is: as of now, we are in this together. You are part of the hive.

Fure's work relies on collectivity, community, and on non-verbal forms of communication. She seeks to create moments of unity within multiplicity. For the piece, titled *Hive Rise*, Fure hand-picked an ensemble of 10 performers via local auditions, a method she tried out for the very first time. This attempt represents yet another step in a career that has been fighting the absence of body politics in contemporary music, of pointing to the power relations represented by who gets to be on stage. With *Hive Rise*, Fure thus consciously broke with the routine of working with a fixed set of (usually white and still mostly male) instrumentalists.

Entering the large water tank on Kollwitzplatz is like accessing another sphere of perception. Even on that warm July night, the air remained cool behind its thick stone walls. Inside the sacral-like, windowless building the eyes take time to adjust to the darkness. The majestic concentric circles of the interior walls produce an unsettling acoustic reverb that lasts up to eighteen seconds, perfect for confusing and disorienting the senses. The immersive experience through which Fure and her diverse cast of performers guide us plays with light and darkness, and with reverb circles that propel us all to restlessly wind through the maze-like interior as if we were exploring a giant cochlea.

Fure's site-specific wonderland uses megaphones as bodily extensions. Performers walk, twist, turn, bend down, pause, and sonically illuminate its landscape while holding custom 3D-printed directional megaphones that focus acoustic energy and produce palpable psychoacoustic artifacts as they bounce off architectural surfaces. Working without a score, they first tease out clicks, quiet lip smacks, breaths, and wordless whispers, creating a networked perception of the migratory hive mind. As connections strengthen between performers and with the audience, the tableau of sound and movement crescendos into the sound of the hive rising. Without realizing it, we all find ourselves at the heart of the reservoir, resonating with the massive final drone. This drone releases us, and we breathe out and search for the exit as its last echoes disappear into the reservoir's walls. As we emerge back into the evening sun and part ways – on foot, by bike, catching the tram or underground – invisible filaments linger between us for hours.

Hive Rise is commissioned by CTM Festival and the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program. The performance at the Großer Wasserspeicher in July 2019 was a test and preview for the piece's premiere at CTM 2020 Festival in January 2020, where it will be adapted for the unique industrial architecture of the world-famous club, Berghain. Created by Ashley Fure and Lilith Glimcher. With Josephine Brinkmann, Yin Cheng-Kokott, Siri Elmqvist, Julian Fricker, Camille Käse, Zwoisy Mears-Clark, Tatiana Mejia, Jorge Osuna Sánchez, Assi Pakkanen, and Valerie Renay.

Ashley Fure's *Filament*

By Steve Smith

Auspicious premieres are a fact of life in New York City... you can get the idea, quite easily, that something important is being created somewhere here, nearly every night of the week. But at an institution like the New York Philharmonic – which bears both the benefit of a supportive audience and the burden of its expectations – a premiere takes on added weight. An orchestra is an expensive beast to tame and feed, under the best of circumstances. What's more, a new composition played by the New York Philharmonic is going to reach listeners who might have little context for interpreting what a contemporary composer is trying to express.

Which doesn't concern Ashley Fure, evidently. "There's a haunting misconception that follows contemporary music around—that you need a degree to be able to listen to it, that there's some right way to experience the sounds," she says in a video clip the New York Philharmonic posted in advance of playing her *Filament* in 2018. "My work intentionally tries to frustrate language," Fure continues. "I don't want your words to be able to describe what you've heard when you hear my music."

Pity the writer tasked with attempting to describe *Filament*, practically every aspect of which defies convention: the deployment of forces, the involvement of guest artists, even the essential nature of the orchestra's participation. It's not just that Fure asks the players to embrace unorthodox techniques and chaotic sounds, as she describes in the video interview. It's also that she actually destabilizes and dislocates the orchestra as we know it, using it as just one element in a complicated web of sensations. Sounds

and bodies move in space. Tones produced naturally tangle with others artificially altered. Encountering so dense a web of unfamiliar sensations, a listener might feel a vulnerability born of uncertainty—a quality amplified by the physical presence of musicians in spaces they don't normally occupy.

How are we meant to respond? Words fail—as Fure surely intended.

Reading the score for *Filament* – as anyone can do on the composer's website – reveals the exactitude Fure invested into producing every sound and gesture. She describes in detail, for instance, how she wants the solo five-string bass tuned, and how it should be played with a plastic credit card. Fure dictates similarly specific effects to the solo trumpeter and bassoonist and to the orchestral players, as well, describing precisely the contours she has in mind, and the vectors along which sounds are meant to travel.

And yet the soloists she chose – Rebekah Heller, Brandon Lopez, and Nate Wooley – are capable, imaginative improvisers, something she surely was banking on. And for all the vaunted precision an orchestra like the New York Philharmonic brings to bear, what Fure requires of the players engenders unpredictability and unrepeatability. No two performances of *Filament*, even if played by the same performers on consecutive nights, will be identical, ever.

What's consistent, though, is the panoply of impressions and sensations the work is calculated to produce. The singers of Constellation Chor, intoning through Seussian custom-printed megaphones, occupied space among audience members as they made their way from a great distance toward the

stage, and performed with physicality of a sort seldom encountered in the concert-music sphere. Heller likewise stood among audience members, rendering her contributions from a substantial distance. Wooley, upstage behind the orchestra, was another paradox: the recondite intimacy of his vocabulary by necessity conveyed through loudspeakers.

The impact is visceral, Fure's elemental tapestry more readily felt than analyzed. For the New York Philharmonic to premiere *Filament* was a bold gesture. That it did so on the glamorous opening-night gala announcing the arrival of its new music director, Jaap van Zweden, was something more: a statement of principle... a portent of challenge to a loyal constituency... a declaration that the orchestra means to engage the now, and the next, head on. Fure, with *Filament*, gave the ensemble a piece positively guaranteed to make an indelible impression.

In Her Own Words

Ashley Fure interviewed by Nate Wooley

Nate Wooley: I don't want to dwell on your musical history, as I tend to think of your work as always being in the future. But, in a thumbnail sketch, how did your upbringing and education (formal or informal) lead you to the work you're making now?

Ashley Fure: My folks bought a beat-up upright piano for \$40 from a church when I was 4. We were just about to move from one small town to another around that time, and one of my earliest memories is me, plunking away at that piano while the moving van gets packed around me, and my dad, coming down the stairs, seeing me a bit disoriented and forlorn, promising me that when we got to Marquette he'd get me piano lessons. At the time, I think he was assuming I was too young and would forget like little kids do. But evidently, I was dogged in my demand he make good on his promise. I started 'composing' right away, which at that age meant improvising, memorizing, and performing little pieces at my piano recitals. I continued the habit throughout my childhood, but no one ever really made much fuss about it. I was the youngest kid in a big, bright, hectic family always zipping from thing to thing. It wasn't until a decade later, when I was trying to find a way out of my small town, that a high school counselor suggested I apply to Interlochen in 'composition.' I remember that moment so vividly – I was like, 'composition? Is that a thing? Is that a thing that people *do*?' I ended up getting a scholarship to Interlochen, and went for the last two years of high school. And from there it was Oberlin, and Harvard, and IRCAM and the ship just sort of took sail...

If I were trying to trace how that early environment impacted my future work, I suppose I'd have to mention Lake Superior. I grew up one block from the

biggest freshwater lake in the world. It is glacially pure and frigidly cold and oceanic to the eyes. Something about proximity to horizon at that scale and the backdrop of const churning must have made its way into my creative DNA. I didn't grow up around much classical music but I did grow up around a lot of live folk music. While I was never drawn to songwriting myself, I do think something about the unflinching immediacy of that genre set the stakes for my future relationship to material. And no doubt, being the youngest and the only girl in a family with three older brothers, all close in age, must have prepped me well to navigate the still quite male-dominated field of contemporary music.

NW: Your work seems to be geared toward constructing a live *experience* for the audience, be it aural, visual, or tactile. How do you feel about presenting your music in a reproducible format (like this release); are certain elements lost or gained?

AF: To be honest, I was a little skeptical about the recording process before we began. I'd never done it before, and – as you suggest – my work has become so much more spatial and multisensory these days. But once we started, I was hooked. It was so satisfying. I couldn't believe it. That many crazy good microphones. On that many crazy good musicians. Up that close. And then I realized, listening in the booth, that I was finally sharing this music with the world in the way I had always heard it myself. Because *that's* how I compose - with the source of the sound 3 inches from my ear. And that kind of charge, that visceral magnetism these sounds offer in close proximity inevitably gets lost to a crowd in a concert hall. So, I'd say it caught me off guard how good it felt to go back to this older work and share it with the world the way I've always hoped they'd hear it.

NW: Our relationship has had a certain element of collaboration, and I know you have created pieces in conversation with architects, lighting designers, etc. And yet, your music is very personal and distinct. In what way does

collaboration help you find new ways to express *your* specific vision?

AF: Anna Tsing talks about collaboration as a process of contamination, a mutual infecting that opens up new pathways of transformation. I like that notion of the act. It points to a sense that encounter diverts linear progress toward messy, co-productive tangles.

It's true that most of the collaborations I've been a part of to date have been instigated by me out of an urge to create something more immersive and multisensory than I could offer through sound alone. But as Tsing says, even if my vision orients the vector of a project's path, the piece is inevitably impacted and stretched and enriched by the involvement of other artists. I have grown profoundly from these close collaborations, through exposure to other aesthetic priorities, disciplinary lineages, and methods of working.

NW: This release will serve as an introduction to your work for many people that haven't been able to attend a live performance. But, as with all documentation, it can only be a snapshot of one creative period. Can you talk a little bit about where this music fits in your development and how it informs what you're doing now?

AF: Most of the pieces on this disk are either older or, if they are more recent, were designed as studies for larger-scale immersive projects. *Shiver Lung* (2016), for example, is an extract of material from an immersive installation opera called *The Force of Things: an Opera for Objects* (2017). *A Library on Lightning* (2018) was conceived as a maquette for material played by three soloists in *Filament: for Trio, Orchestra, and Moving Voices* (2018) (the three performers on this disk were in fact the soloists when *Filament* premiered with the New York Phil). *Soma* and *Something to Hunt* come from an earlier phase in my career, a time I felt more obliged to work within the traditional confines of score, concert ritual, and stage. That format never felt much like home to me, but it's how resources were structured for

young composers when I was coming up. You'd win a competition, or apply to a festival, and the 'prize' would be to write a new piece for an ensemble. *Soma* (2012) and *Something to Hunt* (2014) both come from that era. They both premiered at Darmstadt and both received prizes there. *Something to Hunt* was awarded the Kranichsteinerpreis, which basically gave me free reign to pitch and premiere whatever I wanted for Darmstadt 2016. Ryan Muncy had premiered *Something to Hunt* with Dal Niente, and the week after the festival we both moved to New York – me from Paris, Ryan from Chicago. That August (2014) we grabbed at an East Village dive bar and Ryan, who had moved to New York to join ICE, suggested ICE wanted to commission a new project from me. I said, "Great! I want to make a puppet opera!" That 'puppet opera' became *The Force of Things: An Opera for Objects*, which we staged as a work-in-progress in Darmstadt 2016 and premiered more fully during Peak Performances in 2017.

So, the set of pieces on this disk map a transition in my creative trajectory, from a time I wrote concert music, somewhat under duress, to a time when I have enough agency and visibility to mobilize the resources I need to make the immersive, multisensory work I've always wanted to offer the world.

NW: What's your reason for making music?

AF: Luring people into hyperpresence is a political act. Doing so in simultaneity – with hundreds or thousands of humans in the same place, at the same time, showing up, turning off, and tuning in, with intensity – can be profound.

We have so few civic spaces left that allow us to commune outside language. And while there is much in classical music culture I find haunting – its colonial history, its homogeneity, its exorbitant cost – the gatherings that tradition calls forth are some of the last in the West to carry an expectation of phone-free focus and collective silence. I still find it surreal and deeply moving that humans come together and sit down in silence just so air

molecules will bump against their bodies at the same time. What a precious resource. That many bodies, in one space, at one time, listening as hard as they can for the time that you have them. What radical potential might lie in this act of collective focus? What opportunities for reckoning and renegotiation of social codes?

My work embraces these questions and tries to ask: without stories, without melodies, without heroes, without God, without mastery, without permanence, and without apocalypse, where do we go to deal with this moment. Where do we go to find each other.

What draws me to sound is sound's ability to draw us into our bodies and into each other in radically present ways.

Contributors

Ashley Fure (b.1982) is an American composer and sound artist. Called “raw, elemental,” and “richly satisfying” by The New York Times, her work explores the kinetic source of sound, bringing focus to the muscular act of music making and the chaotic behaviors of raw acoustic matter. She holds a PhD in Music Composition from Harvard University and joined the Dartmouth College Music Department as Assistant Professor in 2015. A finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Music, Fure also won a 2018 DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Prize, a 2017 Rome Prize in Music Composition, a 2017 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2016 Foundation for Contemporary Arts *Grant for Artists*, a 2015 Siemens Foundation Commission Grant, the 2014 Kranichsteiner Composition Prize from Darmstadt, the 2014 Busoni Prize from the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, a 2014 Mellon Post-doctoral Fellowship from Columbia University, a 2013 Fulbright Fellowship to France, a 2013 Impuls International Composition Prize, a 2012 Darmstadt Stipendienpreis, a 2012 Staubach Honorarium, a 2011 Jezek Prize, and a 2011 10-month residency at Akademie Schloss Solitude. Her work has been commissioned by major ensembles throughout Europe and the United States including The New York Philharmonic, The Los Angeles Philharmonic, Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Modern, the Diotima Quartet, International Contemporary Ensemble, Talea, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and Dal Niente. Notable recent projects include *The Force of Things: An Opera for Objects*, an immersive intermedia opera called “staggeringly original” and “the most purely visceral music-theatre outing of the year” by Alex Ross in the New Yorker; and *Bound to the Bow*, for Orchestra and Electronics, named “boldly individual” by the New York Times and “the most arresting of the world premieres” at the 2016 New York Phil Biennial in the New Yorker.

The **International Contemporary Ensemble** (ICE) is an artist collective that is transforming the way music is created and experienced. As performer, curator, and educator, the International Contemporary Ensemble explores how new music intersects with communities across the world. The Ensemble's 36 members are featured as soloists, chamber musicians, commissioners, and collaborators with the foremost musical artists of our time. Works by emerging composers have anchored the Ensemble's programming since its founding in 2001, and the group's recordings and digital platforms highlight the many voices that weave music's present.

The **Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra** presents approximately eight major concerts each year and frequently collaborates with renowned guest artists and conductors. The orchestra performs a diversity of literature comprising major works of the symphonic repertoire, concerti and new music. The orchestra also performs with choir and other ensembles, and is the resident orchestra for the annual ballet production.

Praised for her "flair" and "deftly illuminated" performances by The New York Times, bassoonist **Rebekah Heller** is a uniquely dynamic solo and collaborative artist. Called "an impressive solo bassoonist" by The New Yorker, she is fiercely committed to expanding the modern repertoire for the bassoon. Her debut solo album of world premiere recordings (featuring five new pieces written with and for her), [100 names](#), was called "pensive and potent" by The New York Times and her newly-released second album, [METAFAGOTE](#) (also entirely made up of pieces created with and for her), is receiving wide acclaim.

Brandon Lopez is a New York-based composer and bassist working at the fringes of jazz, free improvisation, noise and new music. His music has been praised as "brutal" (*Chicago Reader*) and "relentless" (*The New York Times*). From the New York Philharmonic's David Geffen Hall to the DIY basements of Brooklyn, Lopez has worked beside many luminaries of jazz,

classical, poetry, and experimental music, including Fred Moten, John Zorn, Okkyung Lee, Ingrid Laubrock, Tony Malaby, Tyshawn Sorey, Bill Nace, Chris Potter, Edwin Torres, Tom Rainey, Cecilia Lopez, Sun Ra Arkestra, Susan Alcorn, Mette Rasmussen, and many others.

Nate Wooley was born in Clatskanie, Oregon and began playing trumpet professionally with his father, a big band saxophonist, at the age of 13. His time in Oregon, a place of relative quiet and slow time reference, instilled in Wooley a musical aesthetic that has informed all of his music making for the past 20 years. Considered one of the leading lights of the American movement to redefine the physical boundaries of the horn, Wooley has been gathering international acclaim for his idiosyncratic trumpet language.

César Alvarez is a New York-based composer, lyricist, playwright, and performance maker. They create large experimental musicals as non-normative possibility spaces for embodiment, inter-dimensionality, socio-political transformation, kinship and coexistence across difference.

Dahlia Borsche is a musicologist and curator. In 2019 she took on the position of Head of Music at the DAAD Artist-in-Berlin programme.

Taïca Replansky is the communications and EU projects manager for CTM Festival in Berlin

Steve Smith has been involved professionally in music and media for nearly 30 years as arts editor at the *Boston Globe*, music editor at *Time Out New York* and as a contributor to *The New York Times*. He writes now for *The New Yorker* and is the Director of Publications for *National Sawdust*.

Zachary Woolfe has been the classical music editor at The New York Times since 2015. Prior to joining The Times, he was the opera critic of the New York Observer.

Soma, Something to Hunt, Library on Lightning recorded March 1st and 2nd, 2019 at Oktaven Audio by Ryan Streber

All compositions by Ashley Fure

Shiver Lung recorded March 3, 2019 at The Bunker Studio by Caley Monahan-Ward

All compositions mixed and mastered by Ryan Streber and Ashley Fure

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