PLOrk: Identity

Princeton Laptop Orchestra
April 30, 2018 at 8:00 pm
Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall

Pieces by PLOrk, Jason Treuting, Jeff Snyder, Alyssa Weinberg, and Alex Dowling

Director
Jeff Snyder

Associate Director
Jason Treuting

Assistant Director
Mike Mulshine

Ensemble
Jenny Beck, Josh Becker, Alex Cavoli, Rajeev Erramilli, Florent Ghys, Jessica Ji, Eric Li, Abbie Minard, Alex Dowling, Emma O’Halloran, Anson Jones, Cleek Schrey, Nikitas Tampakis, Matt Wang, Alyssa Weinberg, Bora Yoon

Program

Tethered
by Alyssa Weinberg

Jenny Beck, Florent Ghys, Mike Mulshine, Cleek Schrey, Jason Treuting, Alyssa Weinberg

Drone and Drums
Translated by Jason Treuting

Rajeev Erramilli, Mike Mulshine, Jason Treuting, Matt Wang

EVQ 1
by Alex Dowling

Alex Dowling, Emma O’Halloran, Anson Jones, Mike Mulshine

Intermission

Keylogger
by PLOrk

Josh Becker, Alex Cavoli, Jessica Ji, Mike Mulshine, Jeff Snyder, Jason Treuting, Matt Wang, Bora Yoon

Visuals: Eric Li

Opposite Earth
by Jeff Snyder

Jenny Beck, Josh Becker, Alex Cavoli, Rajeev Erramilli, Florent Ghys, Jessica Ji, Abbie Minard, Mike Mulshine, Jeff Snyder, Nikitas Tampakis, Jason Treuting, Matt Wang, Alyssa Weinberg, Bora Yoon

Percussion robots: Steven Kemper
Welcome

As Chair of the Department of Music, it is always a privilege to welcome you to each of the over 100 concerts that we sponsor every year on the Princeton University Campus. The 2017–2018 academic year, however, will forever be a milestone in the history of the Music Department. As I write this letter, the Music Department and the Lewis Center for the Arts have completed the initial stages of moving into our superb new spaces in the Lewis Arts complex and are gearing up for the inaugural celebration: a four-day Festival of the Arts, October 5–8, in which the entire campus will be alive with music, theater, dance, poetry, and the visual arts. For our loyal concert audience, accustomed to hearing our marvelous ensembles (orchestral, choral, jazz, African music, early music, and laptop orchestra), Princeton Sound Kitchen, Princeton University Concerts, numerous student and faculty recitals, and chamber music concerts in Richardson and Taplin, everything will be much the same, aside from the landscape on Alexander Street. The real change will be behind the scenes, where the addition of the New Music Building at the Lewis Arts complex provides extra rehearsal and studio spaces, an increased opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues in the Lewis Center for the Arts, and not to mention novel spaces that will undoubtedly inspire some unconventional performances.

colossal—should satisfy every taste. Highlights include two operatic explorations of the Orpheus myth: Steve Mackey’s Orpheus Unsung, to be presented as part of the Festival of Arts, will be followed in January by Princeton University Opera Theater’s performance of Claudio Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo, conducted by Gabriel Crouch. Rudresh Mahanthappa, director of the Jazz Program, continues to introduce our students to jazz music from various traditions, and will welcome guest artists including Gerald Clayton and Archie Shepp to the stage this year. Jeff Snyder, director of Princeton University Laptop Orchestra, begins a new position as Senior Lecturer in Electronic Music. We are also particularly proud to celebrate Michael Pratt’s 40th year as conductor of the Princeton University Orchestra, to be marked in April by a gala performance of Benjamin Britten’s stirring War Requiem with the Princeton University Glee Club and Princeton Pro Musica.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for being a vital part of our community and providing such loyal and enthusiastic support for our students and faculty. Hang on tight as we embark upon this new phase in the life of our Department—it’s going to be an exciting adventure!

Wendy Heller
Scheide Professor of Music History
Chair, Department of Music

We urge you to join us for this particularly exciting year of music; our eclectic offerings—old and new, local and global, intimate and
Program Notes

Tethered
*Tethered* is an experiment in movement-specific sound creation, making use of tethers, motion sensors, and an interactive sculptural object which I have named the Jellyfish.
—Alyssa Weinberg

Drone and Drums Translated
*Drone and Drums Translated* is the 4th iteration of a solo I made for a collaboration I did with the French choreographers in *Projet in Situ* several years ago that explores an expanding and contracting 3:2 polyrhythm. It has had a life as a solo drum set piece, a song that So Percussion made with the guitarist/singer Grey McMurray, a quartet of flute/cello/guitar/drums made for a collaboration with Keila Perez-Vega and Duende for their 2017 *Break my Echo* show in Philadelphia and now, this electrified version for PLOrk. The orchestration was a collaboration between myself, Mike, Matt and Rajeev and the choices of synth sounds and processed trombone are as important to this arrangement as the notes on the page.

EVOQ
This piece uses and misuses vocal effects such as autotune and harmonizers to create a type of 'electronically-augmented' choir.

Keylogger
What do a photocopier and keyboard have in common? Well, they are both sites of human intervention on otherwise mechanical devices. *Keylogger,* and the accompanying visual performance *This is a Computer Science Department Independent Work Project,* are interested in working within the confines of their respective technologies and mediums, pushing them to the limits of what they can do, by using live coding and live photocopying.

*Keylogger* is simultaneously performed and written—it does not exist before the performance and will only exist after as a recording (if recorded). Its success as a live coding/photocopying piece depends on the fact that each performance is entirely improvisational, reacting in the moment, and human in nature.

Special thanks to Charlie Roberts, who created the programming language Gibberwocky, which we are using in this piece.

Opposite Earth
This is an animated notation piece for an open instrumentation. It was written for PLOrk and is intended to be performed by any combination of acoustic and electronic instruments. The “conductor” changes the image components in real-time to guide the course of the piece. For instance, the conductor can add and remove rings (performers), planets (pitches), and ticks or open circles (percussive sounds) at will. The color of the lines that the elements cross conveys which of five pitch gamuts are used. Planet/moon collisions are sonically represented by robotically actuated percussion instruments. Thanks to Drew Wallace for much of the visual Javascript magic.
2017–2018 Season

Department of Music
Wendy Heller, Chair
Marilyn Ham, Department Manager
Elizabeth Schupsky, Business Manager
Gregory Smith, Academic Administrator
Ryan Dalton, Program Manager
Jeremiah LaMontagne, Technical Support Specialist

Program in Performance
Michael Pratt, Director
Gabriel Crouch, Associate Director
Rudresh Mahanthappa, Associate Director

Concert Office
Marna Seltzer, Director
John Burkhalter, Subscription Manager
Dasha Koltunyuk, Marketing & Outreach Manager
Deborah Rhoades, Accounts Manager
Henry Valoris, Production Manager
Andrés Villalta, Audio Specialist
Justin Stanley, Assistant Production Manager

Campus Venue Services
Nick Robinson, Director
Marguerite Vera, Deputy Director
Kathleen Coughlin, Assistant Director, Performing Arts Services
Mary Kemler, Assistant Director, Client Resources
James T. Taylor, Systems and Support Manager
Sharon Maselli, Audience Services Manager
Bryan Logan, Production Manager, Performing Arts Services
Lindsay Hanson, Artist Services Manager
Jim Allington, Audio Engineer
Bill Pierce, Theater Operations Technician
Anne Cutrona, Theater Operations Technician
Matthew Halbert, Theater Operations Technician

Lewis Arts Complex
Danielle Dennis, Venue Manager
Raymond Chalmé, Venue Associate
Ahren Henby, Venue Associate

All concerts and programs are subject to change. The use of photographic, video or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute your electronic devices and put them away for the duration of the performance.
The PLOrk Identity Program (to be PERFORMED on DEMAND)
1. On an letter size sheet of paper, set “PLOrk” in Univers 65 at 72 points centered both vertically and horizontally.
2. Print.
3. Using only a photocopier, produce a black and white copy of the printed text, moving the paper around on the scan plate in order to induce distortions in the reproduction.
4. Scan the resulting print.
5. Trace the text as a vector.
6. Save.

The idea of a generative identity, or identity program, is not new. One does not need to look very far back into the history of design and branding in order to find several notable examples, such as Pentagram's design for MIT Media Lab which uses a predefined grid to generate logos for each of its groups, or IDEO's previous identity, which consisted of four blocks which were rearrangeable to create different logos. It is a visual function in which a set of parameters or requirements are given and out comes a visual identity.

In computer programming, a function is an atomic unit of operation. Not so different from a mathematical function that we all learned in school, a program/function takes an input/x to produce an output/f(x). Give it an input, and the function will generate some output following a set of rules.

Functions are used because they provide a “one size fits all” type of specificity. They provide vast variability and possibility, but only within very specific constraints. Similarly, generative identities promise a similar type of freedom (or lack thereof). Both programs follow a strict set of rules that remove a human operator from the equation.

Music produced through functions must reject these conventions or risk being banal and predictable. The pursuit of novelty, even novel boringness, in experimental electronic music requires pushing against the constraints of functions and computing. It is at this point that we need to look one level higher, to those that actually write these these functions. It is the human hand that must manipulate, or rather pervert, the existing conventions and constraints provided by the original language designers in order to achieve the experience it is looking for. It must push the software and warp it in order to produce what was previously unachievable.

Generative identity programs suffer from many of the same fears that electronic music does. However, as far as graphic identities are concerned, these fears are often realized. Failed graphic identities are often more predictable than the music that has fallen into a similar trap. And perhaps it is for this reason that generative identities have fallen out of style.

Photocopiers are physical functions. Their existence is predicated on doing one job very well. Its program: take an input/x and produce the very same output/f(x) = x. Photocopy a logo, and it will produce the same logo. It is predictable. But consider the site of the glass plate of the photocopier. It is a site in which quite literally the human hand is involved in the means of production. Another site of intervention is that of the