

***The Appearance of Sound: Listening to Sculptural Percussion***

Submitted as partial fulfilment of a PhD Research Degree – Thesis by Creative Project

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## **Abstract**

This practice-led research inquiry explores the field of 'Sculptural Percussion' as defined in a series of works created by Rosemary Joy between 2008-2014. Taking the form of a performance and an accompanying exegesis, the research investigates sculptural percussion as a means of creating subtle and transformative effects on the musician and the audience. Performed by percussionists on sculptures that primarily comprise handmade elements and found objects, the works are mostly performed in front of a deliberately small audience. The research explores a number of artistic strategies, which together encourage a sense of intimacy and connection between audience, musician and sculpture in the performance of sculptural percussion. Informed by perspectives drawn from phenomenology, relational aesthetics and contemporary sound theory, the exegesis details key aspects of Joy's sculptural percussion works including the scale of audience and sculpture, the proximity of the audience to the musician, ideas around site specificity and the interaction of visual and aural perception to create a focussed listening experience. The historical and theoretical context of the work is examined through discussion of Fluxus experiments with performance; Cage's broadening of the possibilities of contemporary music and R. Murray Schafer's 'ear cleaning'.

In defining the terms 'sculptural percussion' and 'percussive sculptures' the work is situated in relation to the fields of both sound art and percussion. Part of a discernible trend towards deliberately small audiences, the research contributes to the understanding of performance events that make sculpture central to the creation of music. The research makes a particular contribution to the field of percussion, where the possibilities of audience proximity and sculpture have not been thoroughly investigated. The relative weighting of the components of the thesis is as follows: 70% creative component; 30% exegesis.

Rosemary Joy  
2015

## Student Declaration

"I, Rosemary Joy declare that the PhD thesis entitled *The Appearance of Sound: Listening to Sculptural Percussion* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature



Date 13/4/2016

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## Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	6
DVD Contents	7
Introduction – <i>Listening to Sculptural Percussion</i>	8
Artist’s Background	11
Sound Art, Sound Sculpture and Experimental Music	14
An intermingling of the visual and aural	17
Listening	20
Chapter 1	
Boxes and Found Objects	24
Boxes as Frames	26
Percussion and Found Objects	28
Chapter 2	
Collaboration and Context	34
<i>Yakumo Honjin</i>	36
Rock, Paper, Scissors	39
<i>Xantolo</i>	46
The Day of the Dead	48
Ritual and Reverence	51
Chapter 3	
<i>System Building</i>	55
A private critique	58
Architectural engagement	59
Scale and Proximity	63
The Score	67
Chapter 4	
<i>The Appearance of Sound</i>	71
Bibliography	79
Appendices	
Appendix 1: <i>Beauty Boxes</i> score with annotations	86
Appendix 2: <i>System Building</i> score (1-4)	88
Appendix 3: <i>System Building</i> score (1-5)	89
Appendix 4: Notes given to musicians, <i>System Building</i> (1-5)	91
Appendix 5: <i>Xantolo</i> score	92
Appendix 6: <i>The Beginnings of Sleep</i> score	93
Appendix 7: <i>Fratrem</i> score	94
Appendix 8: <i>Yakumo Honjin</i> score	95
Appendix 9: Technical requirements: <i>System Building</i> in China	98
Appendix 10: Review: ‘Reliving Mexico’s day of the dead’	100
Appendix 11: Review: ‘Music for the Quick and the Dead’	101
Appendix 12: Review: ‘Rosemary Joy - <i>System Building</i> ’	103
Appendix 13: Article – ‘Site and Sound: Rosemary Joy’s <i>System Building</i> ’	105
Appendix 14: Article – ‘Rosemary Joy and the Sound World in Miniature’	108
Appendix 15: Program for PhD presentation	114
Appendix 16: List of Sculptural Percussion works	115

## Illustrations

Figure 1.	Joy, <i>System Building</i> , Melbourne Recital Centre Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page	8
Figure 2.	Baumann, Hauser, Joy & Young, <i>Schallmaschine 06</i> , detail of percussive sculpture Percussion: John Arcaro (pictured), Fritz Hauser, Eugene Ughetti, photo: Colin Page	9
Figure 3.	Joy, Pirrie, Young, <i>Ricefields</i> , detail of sculptural scores by Rosemary Joy Yasutaka Hemmi (violin) and Deborah Kayser (soprano), photo: author	12
Figures 4. & 5.	Joy, <i>Field Kits</i> , Linden Centre for Contemporary Art David Hewitt, Peter Humble, Graeme Leak & Vanessa Tomlinson, photo: author	13
Figure 6. & 7.	Joy, <i>Beauty Boxes</i> , presented in <i>The Listening Museum</i> Claire Edwardes and Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion) photos: Oliver Miller	24
Figure 8.	Joy, Pirrie, Young, <i>Ricefields</i> , La Mama photo: Yatzek	34
Figures 9. & 10.	Humble, Joy, Young, <i>Yakumo Honjin</i> creative development, photo: David Young	37
Figure 11.	<i>Scissors box</i> , <i>Yakumo Honjin</i> , photo: Daisy Noyes	40
Figure 12.	<i>Rock box</i> , <i>Yakumo Honjin</i> , photo: Daisy Noyes	40
Figure 13.	<i>Paper box</i> , <i>Yakumo Honjin</i> , photo: Daisy Noyes	41
Figure 14.	Aguilar & Joy, <i>Xantolo</i> , Melbourne Recital Centre, photo: Thea Baumann	46
Figure 15.	Sombrero maker Don Hipolito with his grandsons Village of Tancoco, near Tampico, Mexico photo: author	47
Figure 16.	Day of the Dead ritual dancers, Tantayuca cemetery, near Tampico, Mexico photo: Evaristo Aguilar	48
Figure 17.	Parade leading to Tantayuca cemetery, near Tampico, Mexico photo: Evaristo Aguilar	49
Figure 18.	Aguilar & Joy, <i>Xantolo</i> , Melbourne Recital Centre, photo: Thea Baumann	51
Figure 19.	Joy, <i>System Building</i> , Melbourne Recital Centre Performed by Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page	55
Figure 20.	Joy & Young <i>Underground</i> , Slagwerkgroep den Haag, photo: David Young	56
Figure 21.	Joy & Young <i>Underground</i> , percussive sculpture 'mountain', photo: Yatzek	57
Figure 22.	Joy, <i>System Building</i> , Melbourne Recital Centre Performed by Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page	61
Figure 23.	Joy, <i>The Appearance of Sound</i> , Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, photo: Dean McCartney	71
Figure 24.	Rosemary Joy <i>The Beginnings of Sleep</i> , Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion) photo: Tangible Media	73
Figure 25.	Joy <i>Fratrem</i> , Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion), <i>8 Hits</i> , photo: Tangible Media	75

## DVD Contents

1. Joy, *Beauty Boxes*, 2008  
Performed by Claire Edwardes and Vanessa Tomlinson at Paddington Uniting Church,  
Commissioned and first performed by Ensemble Offspring for *To the Max*
2. Humble, Joy and Young, *Yakumo Honjin* (2009)  
Footage from the creative development and video installation  
Performances by Eugene Ughetti, Yasutaka Hemmi and Takayo Matsumura
3. Humble, Joy and Young, *Yakumo Honjin* (2009)  
Sculptural percussion excerpts  
Performed by Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott
4. Joy, *System Building* (2009)  
Performed by Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti  
Melbourne Recital Centre Salon
5. Joy, *System Building* (2009)  
Performed by Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti  
Carriageworks, Sydney
6. Joy, *The Appearance of Sound* (2011)  
Performed by Vanessa Tomlinson  
Dancehouse
7. Joy, *Fratrem* (2014)  
Performed by Vanessa Tomlinson as part of *8 Hits*

## Introduction – Listening to Sculptural Percussion



Figure 1. Joy, *System Building* (2009), Melbourne Recital Centre  
Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page

During a performance of sculptural percussion work *System Building*, the musicians overheard a child whispering to his father “Dad, is this really percussion?”<sup>1</sup> While the work was performed by percussionists, a number of the familiar parameters of percussion were absent: there were few rhythmic passages, there was little recognisable as conventional instrumentation and much of the musicians’ time was spent building structures and moving objects around. To this question, I answer resoundingly *Yes! This is percussion!* Percussion is the most flexible and versatile of the musical fields. The percussionist can play the floor, table, pen, paper as well as the custom-made drums of the concert hall. Composers have been plundering the kitchen cupboard, wreckers’ yard and tool shop for over one hundred years to find new sound possibilities.

In his seminal book, *Silence*, John Cage wrote of the expansive possibilities of the percussive palette:

Percussion music is a contemporary transition from keyboard-influenced music to the all-sound of the future. Any sound is acceptable to the composer of percussion

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<sup>1</sup> Quinn Knight, age 4, during a performance of *System Building*, artist Rosemary Joy, performed by Eugene Ughetti and Evaristo Aguilar, Radial System V, 2009.

music; he explores the academically forbidden 'non-musical' field of sound insofar as is manually possible.<sup>2</sup>

Released from the tyranny of conventional instrumentation, percussion can incorporate the textural, rhythmic and dynamic range in the humblest kitchen bowl, the largest sheet of metal, a frozen lake, a pile of twigs, a plastic bag.<sup>3</sup> It is the essence of flexibility both in objects played and the technique of playing, which can involve scratching, slapping, hitting, chewing, stroking, plucking. Percussionists are open to the possibility of sound in every object. This openness extends to a willingness to engage with new ways of presenting work and new ways of thinking about percussion.



Figure 2. Baumann, Hauser, Joy & Young, *Schallmaschine 06*, detail of percussive sculpture by Rosemary Joy  
Percussion: John Arcaro (pictured), Fritz Hauser, Eugene Ughetti, photo: Colin Page

There was a moment in a sculptural percussion project predating this doctorate in which the key areas of research, which this exegesis will explore, first crystallised. During a performance of *Schallmaschine 06*, percussionist John Arcaro took a ceramic tile and slowly turned it over in his hand. It was riveting. The performance space, in the air-conditioning labyrinth underneath

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<sup>2</sup> J. Cage *Silence* London, Marion Boyars Publishers, reprinted 1987, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Dutch composer Richard Rijnvos's work *Zahgurim, whose number is twenty-three and who kills in an unnatural fashion...* (1987-88) included instrumentation of the largest sheet of metal possible. The work was performed in Melbourne by Aphids in 1999 with a thundersheet of 4x2 metres. Brisbane percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson has done extensive performance and research on the use of found objects. Her work *Music for the Banal, the Obvious, the Everyday* includes a range of objects found near the site of the planned performance including natural materials (twigs, leaves, water), kitchen bowls and other everyday objects. Russian percussion ensemble Ethnobeat created surprisingly resonant sounds playing slabs of ice on a frozen lake in Siberia:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en0p1Y35p3w>

Melbourne's Federation Square, was very dry, quiet and small. Only three audience members were permitted at a time. The sound was unexpected: so crisp, present, piercing. The almost imperceptible, harsh scraping sound was in startling contrast to the tenderness and care with which the musician manipulated the tile. The proximity of the audience to both the musician and sculpture made it possible for something so slight to have great potency.<sup>4</sup>

This exegesis will detail key aspects of my work in sculptural percussion including the miniature scale of both the audience and sculpture, the proximity of the audience to the musician, the journey taken to reach the performance room and the object itself. In defining the terms *sculptural percussion* and *percussive sculptures*, the work will also be situated in relation to the fields of sound art and percussion.

Questions which inform my research include:

- What are the historical and contemporary artistic and theoretical contexts of the work?
- What is the relationship between the scale of the audience and sculpture, the architecture of the performance space and the proximity between audience and musician and how does this combine to create a focussed listening experience?
- How can a text score evoke a particular mode of playing by the musician?

This practice-based research involved the creation of a series of works:

- *Beauty Boxes* (2008) a study of beauty in mass produced and handmade objects.
- *Yakumo Honjin* (2009) a collaboration inspired by a 280 year old Samurai Hotel in far West Japan.
- *Xantolo* (2009) a collaboration about the Mexican Day of the Dead celebrations.
- *System Building* (2009-10), a work inspired by the buildings in which it was performed in Melbourne, Sydney, Berlin, the Netherlands and Beijing.
- *The Appearance of Sound* (2011) an exploration into percussion as almost soundless manipulation of small moveable abstract sculptures.
- *Fratrem* (2014) a percussive elegy in anticipation of loss.
- *The Beginnings of Sleep* (2014) exploring fragments of overheard sound.

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<sup>4</sup> *Schallmaschine 06* was a collaboration between Rosemary Joy, composer David Young, percussionist Fritz Hauser and architect Boa Baumann and Speak Percussion. Presented as part of the 2006 Melbourne Festival, the work featured three of Joy's percussive sculptures performed by percussionists Fritz Hauser, Eugene Ughetti and John Arcaro in separate hidden chambers underneath Federation Square before an audience of three people at a time. The audience reached the performance spaces after a winding journey through underground passageways. The theme of journey will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3. For a full list of earlier sculptural percussion works, see Appendix 16.

Though the inspiration for each project is very different, there are clear connections between them in terms of staging, materials used in the construction of the sculptures and the dynamic range of the performed work. For the purpose of this exegesis, I will examine each work separately in relation to a broader field that is most relevant to its development and performance. Chapter 1 situates *Beauty Boxes* in the context of visual art and contemporary percussion with a particular focus on the use of boxes as an ordering device for found objects. Chapter 2 examines the collaborative context in which *Yakumo Honjin* developed as part of Melbourne arts company Aphids. It also details *Xantolo* as a form of performance as ritual developed through cross-cultural collaboration. Chapter 3 explores the site specific nature of *System Building* highlighting aspects of the work that relate to scale, intimacy and proximity. Chapter 4 introduces the three works created most recently, positing a new direction for my practice.

Perspectives drawn from phenomenology, relational aesthetics and reflections by sound art theorists inform this investigation into the relationship between the musician, audience, sculpture and percussion. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writing about the intermingling of the senses has been fundamental to understanding the relationship between the visual and aural aspects of the work. Gaston Bachelard's examination of the experience of place provided a poetic prism through which aspects of the work relating to architecture, boxes and miniature forms could be explored, while experiments by Cage and Fluxus provide historical context. R. Murray Schafer's investigation into *ear cleaning* and Pauline Oliveros' work in *deep listening* helped to clarify the listening experience created by my work. Contemporary writers such as Brandon LaBelle provided vigorous models for writing about sound while providing a broader understanding of where my work sits in relation to experimental music and sound art.

### **Artist's Background**

The sculptural percussion works detailed in this exegesis are the most recent manifestations of a long-term investigation into the connection between sculpture and percussion.<sup>5</sup> With a background in both music and visual art, I have long been fascinated by the connection between the two fields. An interest, while still at school, in Kandinsky's painted representations of music evolved into experiments with notating music in blocks of colour. In the eighties, as a guitarist in an all-girl power pop band, I was simultaneously thrilled by the responsiveness of an audience mass and bored with thrashing out the same 4/4 rhythms night after night. I went to events run by the Melbourne Improvisers' Association and new music concerts at Linden Art Gallery in St Kilda and discovered a kind of music that removed familiar signposts and thrilled me with the prospect

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<sup>5</sup> More detail about earlier works is included in Appendix 16.

of never knowing what was going to happen next.<sup>6</sup> This music was outside the magnificent but predictable contours of the classical music I knew from childhood. It was also outside the rigid three-minute song format that I was absorbing in Melbourne's independent band scene, which though it could be tweaked, warped or overlaid with lush and discordant sounds, would still comfortably, at some point, fall into a recognisable chorus or verse. Later, while studying painting and sculpture, I became enamoured with the solidity and also the delicacy possible in an object as a lasting result of an artist's endeavours (as distinct from the ephemerality of music). However, I found the brief glances at artwork from gallery visitors unsatisfying as an audience response. A comment by my high school art teacher Godwin Bradbeer that he wished people would applaud paintings struck a chord. Even when a piece of art was purchased and positive exclamations were made, there was still a remove from the moment of actual engagement by someone with the work. I yearned for an art that captured both the audience responsiveness to live music and the privacy of engagement with an object in a gallery.



Figure 3. Joy, Pirrie, Young, *Ricefields* (1998), detail of sculptural scores by Rosemary Joy Yasutaka Hemmi (violin) and Deborah Kayser (soprano), photo: author

Working with Melbourne arts company Aphids in 1998 to develop sculptural musical scores for a project called *Ricefields*, I had a potent experience of the interaction of sculpture and sound which presaged my own development of sculptural percussion.<sup>7</sup> For the project, the lead artists created sculptures that worked as both sculpture and as musical notation for the musicians to interpret to create sound. It was a revelation: at last I was working directly with both sculpture and music. However, I was still looking for a closer connection between the sculpture and musician, a way of making the object more central. As a sculptural score, the object provided the starting

<sup>6</sup> *Linden New Musicales* were a concert series at Linden Gallery in St. Kilda operating from 1986 to 1994, produced by Warren Burt and Brigid Burke. The Melbourne Improvisers' Association was formed in 1987 by Craig Dickason, Greg Rosser and Robert Jackson later becoming the Make It Up Club in the mid-1990's (email from Robert Jackson to author 11/7/2015).

<sup>7</sup> Discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 *Collaboration and Context*.

point for the musician; once the piece was learnt, it became somehow not necessary, except as an performance setting for the music. I wanted to find a way of working with sculpture that gave the object equal weight to the sound produced.

In 2000, I began a series of collaborations with percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson exploring the idea of a sculpture that was both an instrument *and* a score: a sculpture that had only one possible performance embedded in it. By 2003, this had evolved into the development of handcrafted percussion kits personalised for the percussionist who would play them. I did not want the musicians to be purely technicians fulfilling tasks proscribed by others. I wanted them to be inspired by their own percussion box containing a small array of their favourite sounds. A series of projects followed with each one sowing the seeds for the next exploration. The sculptural scores sparked the investigation into sculptural percussion. Frustrations experienced in creating large-scale sculptures prompted the creation of miniature wooden boxes, which in turn inspired a series of projects resulting in the ones included for discussion in this exegesis.



Figures 4. & 5. Joy, *Field Kits* (2003), Linden Centre for Contemporary Art  
David Hewitt, Peter Humble, Graeme Leak and Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion) photo: author

As a note on my role in creating these works, I have always considered myself an artist who works with percussion and percussionists, rather than a composer. I do not have the training or interest to create conventionally notated musical scores. It has been something of a leap for me to consider the lists of instructions that I develop as a *score*. I was surprised to see myself listed as one of eight *composers* on the marketing material for Vanessa Tomlinson's concert *8 Hits* in 2014.<sup>8</sup> In preparing the program notes for my PhD presentation, I felt obliged to clarify that my role included devising the score and was thus also that of a composer, because one work involved a 'real' composer. If I described myself only as an artist, there may be the assumption that I only concerned myself with the visual aspects of the work. In my sculptural percussion

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<sup>8</sup> *8 Hits*, a solo percussion concert by Vanessa Tomlinson, discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

projects, I generally take responsibility for both the visual and aural aspects of the presentation, providing a text score as a structure for the musicians to work within.<sup>9</sup>

### **Sound Art, Sound Sculpture and Experimental Music**

Sculptural percussion is interdisciplinary, spanning the fields of sculpture, sound art and percussion. This kind of interdisciplinary inquiry has a long history dating back to the early twentieth century with the emergence of the Futurists. The Futurists could be considered the first truly cross-disciplinary art movement and one of the earliest to explore what would now be termed *sound art*. The Futurist *noise machines* or *intonarumori* created by painter, Luigi Russolo aimed to "broaden and enrich the field of sound".<sup>10</sup> Comprising a box, an engine and a large funnel, Russolo's machines caused uproar when first performed because of the cacophony created.<sup>11</sup> I can still recall the excitement I felt as a university student reading the Futurist manifesto, which introduced sound into an otherwise completely silent first year Fine Arts course. Notwithstanding their extreme right wing politics, the Futurists' legacy has been extensive, providing the groundwork for many innovations in experimental sound-making including *musique concrète*, graphic notation and the 'prepared' piano.<sup>12</sup>

John Cage continued Russolo's investigation of noise in the 1930s-50s, encouraging painters, filmmakers and poets to take up sound composition. By the late 1960's, experimentation across disciplines by a diverse group of artists, particularly with the emergence of new technologies in sound and video recording, resulted in the development of work that would become known as sound art.<sup>13</sup> In *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age*, composer and musicologist Linda Kouvaras writes that Australia's "rich history in experimental music" actually began much earlier with Melbourne composer and musician Percy Grainger's experiments in 'Free Music' in 1938. However, as composer Warren Burt notes, most of Grainger's experiments took place in the USA meaning that their impact on the early development of an Australian experimental music tradition was limited.<sup>14</sup> The introduction of Cage's works to a group of

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 14 for PhD presentation program.

<sup>10</sup> Russolo, Luigi, 1913, 'Intonarumori Futuristi', quoted in Battcock, Gregory (ed), *Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Critical Anthology of New Music*, New York, Elsevier-Dutton Publishing Company, 1981, p.84.

<sup>11</sup> R. Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1979, p.15.

<sup>12</sup> L. Kouvaras, *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age*, UK, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013, p. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> P. Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, p.169

<sup>14</sup> Burt, W, 'Some Musical and Sociological Aspects of Australian Experimental Music', *Resonate Magazine*, 31/7/2007, originally published in *Sounds Australian* 37, 1993 at <http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/article/some-musical-and-sociological-aspects-of-australian-experimental-music#ref>, accessed 16/3/2015. Kouvaras notes that research and promotion of Grainger's work through the Grainger Museum has resulted in resurgence of his influence which has impacted on a number of contemporary Australian Composers. Kouvaras p. 7.

Melbourne jazz musicians in 1963 was the pivotal moment in the development of Australian experimental music, laying the foundation for the later development of sound art.<sup>15</sup>

Sound art emerged in Australia in the 1970's as part of "an aesthetic crossroads" that was taking place in experimental music, critical theory and interdisciplinary study both in Australia and internationally with key events including the publication of Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, the development of Acoustic Ecology by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer and the invitation to composer Warren Burt to teach at La Trobe University.<sup>16</sup> However, despite decades of exploration in the form since then, the term 'sound art' remains somewhat ill defined.<sup>17</sup> Kouvaras writes:

Some define sound art as that practised by visual artists, focussing on the prevalence of installations that contain a visual component, while sonic art is that done by musicians... The subjects, complexity, hybridization and array of today's sound-based music challenge any simple definition of the artform.<sup>18</sup>

Some writers focus on the interdisciplinary nature of sound art: according to Australian sound artist Ros Bandt sound art "involves the crossing of boundaries from music and fine art, including sculpture, installation, performance, multimedia, information technology, soundscape,"<sup>19</sup> while other writers focus on the processes involved: sound writer Brandon LaBelle defines sound art "as a practice [that] harnesses, describes, analyses, performs and interrogates the condition of sound and the processes by which it operates."<sup>20</sup> As part of a concerted effort to establish recognised definitions, composer and musicologist Leigh Landy defines sound art as a subset of *sonic art*, which "generally designates the art form in which the sound is its basic unit."<sup>21</sup> He identifies music by composers such as John Cage as sonic art but defined sound art more strictly:

The key concept behind sound art is that it refers to works of sound organisation that are normally not conceived for concert performance. They can be found in galleries, museums, in public spaces, on the radio or wherever, but they are normally not presented as musical works.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> W. Burt, 1993. Artist and musician Robert Rooney introduced Cage and graphic notation to Melbourne musicians Barry McKimm, Syd Clayton, Peter Webster and Barry Quinn.

<sup>16</sup> Kouvaras p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> L. Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, Cambridge MA, MIT, 2007, p. 163.

<sup>18</sup> Kouvaras, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> R. Bandt, 'Sound Art Reconsidered', *Sounds Australian* 64, 2004, p. 46

<sup>20</sup> B. LaBelle 2006 p. ix.

<sup>21</sup> Landy, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> L. Landy, 'Electroacoustic Music Studies and Accepted Terminology: You can't have one without the other', talk given at the Electroacoustic Music Studies Network, Beijing, 2006, accessed 15/3/2015 <http://www.ems-network.org/IMG/EMS06-LLandy.pdf>

According to Landy's definition, "sound art is usually an art with an implied context, again normally not a concert hall. Sonic art works may be played anywhere including the concert hall."<sup>23</sup> In his view, the distinction between sound art and sonic art is largely determined by the context of a work's performance: "the type of artwork involved and the venue where it is exposed determines whether a work is both a sound art and a sonic artwork or simply the latter."<sup>24</sup> On the ElectroAcoustic Resource Site (EARS), a website set up by Landy and others, the entry for sound art reads:

This term has been used inconsistently throughout the years. Currently it is generally used to designate sound installations (associated with art galleries and museums), public sonic art and site-specific sonic art events.<sup>25</sup>

One identified area of sound art is *sound sculpture*. Academic Steven Connor describes sound sculpture as concerned with the "ambiguous embodiments or fixations of sound."<sup>26</sup> The development of sound sculpture can be seen as part of the "loosening and dematerialisation of sculpture that has taken place over the last century."<sup>27</sup> One early example of such an expansion in the domain of sculpture is Robert Morris' *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) which comprised a box containing a speaker, which played a tape recording of the sounds made as the artist constructed the box.<sup>28</sup> Seth Kim-Cohen writing in *In the Blink of an Ear: Towards a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* describes the work as "a very early, if not the earliest example of a work existing simultaneously, equally, as sculpture and as soundwork."<sup>29</sup> Morris' work has been described as breaking "through the heavy muteness of traditional art practice."<sup>30</sup> Rosalind Krauss' important essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* describes some of the immense diversity in form and material that by the time of her writing in 1979 had begun to be described as sculpture including earthworks, rows of TV monitors and mirrors in a room. Krauss writes that this diversity was only possible if "the category [of sculpture] can be made to become almost infinitely malleable."<sup>31</sup> By the time Steven Connor's 'Ears have Walls: On Hearing Art' is published in 2005, the field of sculpture had expanded and been redefined to the extent that it was possible to identify two kinds of sound sculpture: "a piece of shaped sound, often with a close relationship to

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<sup>23</sup> Landy *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Landy, 2007 p. 15

<sup>25</sup> The ElectroAcoustic Resource Site (EARS), accessed 15/3/2015, <http://ears.pierrecouprie.fr/>. As an example of the confusion around definitions, the EARS site equates the German term *Klangkunst* with sound art asserting that it is in greater usage than [the] English language term". Kouvaras defines *sound art* much more broadly than *Klangkunst* which "for some restricts the field to sound installations involving the visual realm". Kouvaras p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> S. Connor, 'Ears have Walls: On Hearing Art', FO A RM 4, 2005, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p. 45. Incidentally, Cage was given a private performance of the work

<sup>29</sup> S. Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Towards a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*, New York, Continuum, 2009, p. 47

<sup>30</sup> S. Voegelin, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound*, London, Bloombury Academic, 2014, p.91.

<sup>31</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, Vol. 8., Spring, 1979,

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0162-2870%28197921%298%3C30%3ASITEF%3E2.O.C0%3B2-Y> accessed 15/3/2015

a specific location” and secondly, “instrument-like objects that are themselves designed or adapted to produce sound.”<sup>32</sup> In her examination of sound sculpture in the Australian context, Bandt writes, “most sound sculptures defy categorisation and are their own composite blend of visual and aural characteristics.”<sup>33</sup>

When I first began this area of research, I used the term ‘miniature percussion instruments’ to describe the objects I made. However, I found the connotations too restrictive, conjuring images of triangles and shakers in the minds of the people with whom I spoke. It also put an unwelcome focus purely on the sound, which while often percussive and textural is not intended to be heard separately from the experience of the performance. My role developing these works involves all aspects of the performance. It is not simply instrument building. The objects I make are repositories of ideas as well as vehicles for sound-making. They are situated in performance contexts in which every detail of their reception by the audience is considered. The work contributes to an understanding of the way that close proximity between percussionist and a very small audience can create a powerful and subtle experience of sound and sculpture.

I began using the terms *percussive sculptures* and *sculptural percussion* to situate the work in the fields of both music and visual art, without privileging either. While I may seem to use the terms interchangeably, the emphasis of one term on sculpture and the other on percussion dictates when each is used: when the focus is on the object, I use the term ‘percussive sculpture’; when the focus is on the sound, I use the term sculptural percussion. From my research into the history of percussion, experimental music, sound art and sound sculpture, I now situate my work in sculptural percussion as part of an experimental tradition of composition for percussion and also as a type of sound sculpture, which is a subset of sound art. I will not use the term *sound art* alone because of its close associations with gallery-based installation art settings. The term *sculptural percussion* highlights the interdisciplinary nature of both the work and my role: I am an artist who creates sculptures and text scores that are performed by percussionists in events where every detail is carefully considered - from the site, lighting and the movement of the audience through the space. The events are not concerts, theatre or exhibitions but somewhere in between.

### **An intermingling of the visual and aural**

At the heart of my sculptural percussion works is an intermingling of the experience of the aural and visual. The silent sculpture is made vocal through the musician’s playing. The audience sees and hears the sculpture as it is played, with each sense amplifying the experience of the other.

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<sup>32</sup> S. Connor, ‘Ears have Walls: On Hearing Art’, FO A RM 4, 2005, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> R. Bandt, *Sound Sculpture: Intersections in Sound and Sculpture in Australian Artworks*, Sydney, Craftsman House, 2001, p.8.

Merleau-Ponty writes of the way that the senses “intercommunicate by opening onto the structure of a thing. One sees the hardness and brittleness of glass, and when, with a tinkling sound, it breaks, this sound is conveyed by the visible glass.”<sup>34</sup> Words that evoke other senses (such as touch or vision) are often used to describe sounds, for example, “‘soft’, ‘dull’ or ‘sharp’” and this can be seen as an example of what Merleau-Ponty describes as “unity of senses.”<sup>35</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, the individual’s body is the site through which this unification takes place: “the senses translate each other without any need of an interpreter, and are mutually comprehensive without the intervention of any idea.”<sup>36</sup> This interconnectedness has a powerful effect on the experience of each sense with the visual magnifying the experience of the aural and vice versa. In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood*, British anthropologist Tim Ingold when writing about the interchangeability of visual and aural perception concludes:

If hearing is a mode of participatory engagement with the environment, it is not because it is opposed in this regard to vision, but because we ‘hear’ with the eyes as well as the ears. In other words, *it is the very incorporation of vision into the process of auditory perception that transforms passive hearing into active listening.*<sup>37</sup>

The sculptural percussion projects discussed in this exegesis illustrate this transformation: through watching the performance, the audience is propelled into a state of active listening. As the musician manipulates the sculpture, the audience’s attention is drawn to the object, amplifying the perception of the sound that is created by it. Merleau-Ponty describes the role of attention in perceptual processes, as “a kind of searchlight that shows up objects pre-existing in darkness.”<sup>38</sup> By directing the audience’s attention to the object as it is being used to make sound, the musician also creates the possibility of a more sensitised experience of listening. In fact, the word listening has its roots in a Germanic term meaning “to pay attention to”.<sup>39</sup> The audience’s experience is directed by the musician: wherever the performer directs their attention, the audience will follow. Performance theorist and artist Mine Kaylan describes the “quality of presence [as] practically locatable at the level of the actor’s or performer’s attention.”<sup>40</sup> She describes this process in more detail:

The word ‘attention’ implies a direction (a vector) and object, that is, attention to something, and a volume or intensity (force). This introduces a variability factor: a vector

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<sup>34</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge Classics, 2002, p. 266-7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 267 and 273

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.273.

<sup>37</sup> Original emphasis. T. Ingod, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling & Skill*, London and New York, Routledge, p. 277.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.100.

<sup>39</sup> *Listening* from old English *hlysnan* ‘pay attention to’, of Germanic origin, Oxford Dictionary.

<sup>40</sup> M. Kaylan ‘Performance Art’, *Writings on Dance* 7, 1991.

quantity, and force quantity. Therefore what is isolated here as attention is something that the performer or actor can control by changing the direction, the volume and object of his/her attention.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to seeing sculpture in a gallery, where the viewer chooses how long and where they will gaze, in a sculptural percussion performance, the sculpture is activated by the musician who can then hold or release the viewers' attention. In *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud writes of visual art trying "to catch my gaze, the way the new-born child 'asks for' its mother's gaze".<sup>42</sup> Bourriaud describes *relational* art as that which exists in the relational space between artist and viewer rather than discretely as independent objects.<sup>43</sup> In viewing traditional works of sculpture, the gallery visitor has a high level of autonomy. They can look for a moment and then move on. In my work, the sculpture becomes powerful, mobile and assertive rather than passively hoping to be seen.<sup>44</sup> By setting the sculpture within a performance, which holds the audience within the customary decorum of a concertgoer, the sonic and physical possibilities of the work can be revealed to a receptive and attentive group. Bourriaud writes of the way that art is "summoning me to dialogue with it".<sup>45</sup> In the sculptural percussion performance, the audience member is in dialogue with both the musician and the object as it is being activated. Unlike relational artworks discussed by Bourriaud that exist only in the interaction between artist and viewer, the sculptural percussion works do partially exist as objects.<sup>46</sup> However, the sculptural percussion objects are designed to be experienced in live performance and cannot be fully comprehended in video or photographic documentation: the experience of sitting in close proximity to the musician during the performance is the only way to fully understand what the work is about.

By bringing sculpture into the time-based art form of performance, I am seeking to concretise sound, to make a lasting object that represents a solid manifestation of the otherwise transitory, will-o-the-wisp nature of performed music. After a performance, the audience can gaze at the objects and see a visual embodiment of the sounds they had just heard. The audience's experience of the sculpture is framed by the experience of the performance. In *From Shinto to Ando: Studies in Architectural Anthropology*, Günther Nitschke writes of the contrast between "a space structured experience of time" and "a time structured experience of space": the contrast between, say, a three day holiday in which one's experience of a place is completely predicated by the short duration of the visit compared to a four week stay in a holiday house, in which the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, France, Les presses de reel, English translation 2002, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Louise Bourgeois plays on the idea of the object looking back with her work *Nature Study (Velvet Eyes)*, in which two large eyes peer out at the viewer from inside a rock. Schwenger, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> In *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud describes many artworks that only exist momentarily as an interaction between audience and gallery visitors, for example, artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's preparation of food for gallery visitors, Bourriaud, p. 25.

experience of time is moulded by the space in which one resides at leisure.<sup>47</sup> Percussive sculptures *physicalise* sound. The performance creates a time-structured experience of the sculpture. The experience of sound is informed by the appearance of the sculpture and the space in which it is performed. This complex interaction will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

## Listening

There are many ways to think about listening and many ways to listen. In his 2009 essay, for example, Warren Burt discusses sixteen kinds of listening beginning with Tibetan Buddhist Listening Meditation and ending with Dream Listening.<sup>48</sup> Writing some two decades earlier, Roland Barthes draws a distinction between hearing and listening, noting that "hearing is a physiological phenomenon, listening is a psychological act."<sup>49</sup> Within that broad distinction, Barthes identifies three kinds of listening. *Alert* listening is used by an animal or person to tune into the local environment: "the wolf listens for a (possible) noise of its prey, the hare for a (possible) noise of its hunter, the child and the lover for the approaching footsteps which might be the mother's or the beloved's". *Deciphering* is the type of listening in which sounds are decoded for meaning. The third kind is the act of listening to *significance*: "such listening is supposed to develop in an inter-subjective space where 'I am listening' also means 'listening to me'."<sup>50</sup>

According to Barthes, this third kind of listening is the one that is most relevant to the field of art:

'Listening' to a piece of classical music, the listener is called upon to 'decipher' this piece, ie. to recognise (by his culture, his application, his sensibility) its construction, quite as coded (predetermined) as that of a place at a certain period; but 'listening' to a composition (taking the word here in its etymological sense) by John Cage, it is each sound one after the next that I listen to, not in its syntagmatic extension, but in its raw and as though vertical signifying.<sup>51</sup>

This kind of listening encompasses what American musicologist Rose Rosengard Subotnik termed *structural listening*. She identifies a variant of structural listening developed by Adorno and Schoenberg as "a process wherein the listener follows and comprehends the unfolding

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<sup>47</sup> G. Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando: Studies in Architectural Anthropology in Japan*, Great Britain, Academy Editions, 1993, p.35. "If you have, say, three days in which you intend to see the sights of Japan, then your journey can be described as a time-structured experience of space. But if you were to spend an entire week of leisure in a single house, it would be a space structured experience of time" p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> Burt, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> R. Barthes, 'Listening', *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, translated from the French by Richard Howard, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, York, Hill and Wang, 1985, p. 245.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 246.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid* p. 259.

realisation, with all of its detailed inner relationships, of a generating musical conception.”<sup>52</sup> With roots in the late Enlightenment, structural listening is very much part of the Western classical music tradition which presupposes an autonomy to music. In *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Listening*, Eric F. Clarke defines the term autonomy as it relates to music as “the idea of a system that operates according to self-sufficient internal principles – a kind of idealised and hermetic formalism.”<sup>53</sup> Subotnik argues this autonomy is not possible and that the concept of structural listening is flawed because it “does not encourage the open-ended sensitivity to diverse sorts of music that it promises...even more important, perhaps, is the secondary status that such listening accords to the musical parameter of sound.”<sup>54</sup> She proposes the broader category of *stylistic listening*, which allows the listener to take into consideration their understanding of the broader understanding of the cultural context in which the work was created.<sup>55</sup> However, in an essay reprinted in *Beyond Structural Listening?: Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, Martin Scherzinger suggests that Subotnik defines structural listening so narrowly and stylistic listening so broadly that neither term is useful in practice.<sup>56</sup>

Twentieth century developments in the Western musical tradition have demanded additional modes of listening which can come to grips with what composer Michael Nyman describes as “an unprecedented fluidity of composer/performer/listener roles, as it breaks away from the standard sender/carrier/receiver information structure of other forms of Western music.”<sup>57</sup> Composer Pierre Schaeffer, in developing *Musique Concrète*, posited *reduced listening* as “the listening attitude, which consists in listening to the sound for its own sake, as a sound object by removing its real or supposed source and any meaning it may convey.”<sup>58</sup> Kouvaras describes reduced listening as forming “a disconnection between the signification of sounds and their abstract qualities”. She marks a distinction between Schaeffer’s *reduced listening*, which focuses on the sound “as a thing for itself” and *heightened listening*, exemplified by Cage’s work from the 1940s onwards which “insists on context and source and the dissolution of the divide between composer and audience”.<sup>59</sup> Heightened listening stretches the capacity of the listener to engage with new forms

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<sup>52</sup> R. R. Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p.150. “Structural listening is an active mode of listening that, when successful, gives the listener the sense of composing the pieces as it actualises itself in time” *ibid* p. 150. Subotnik identifies Schoenberg’s focus on structural listening as confined to matters relating to the composer while Adorno’s focus is on issues relating to critical theory. p. 149.

<sup>53</sup> E. F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Listening*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.128.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.161.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.170.

<sup>56</sup> M. Scherzinger, ‘Musical Formalism and Its Place in Political Critique’, *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing* edited by Andrew Dell’Antonio, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2004, p.257.

<sup>57</sup> M. Nyman, ‘Towards (a Definition of) Experimental Music’, *Audio Culture*, eds Cox and Warner, New York, Continuum, 2004, p. 218.

<sup>58</sup> Schaeffer quoted in Landy, 2007, p.79.

<sup>59</sup> Kouvaras, p.27.

of music composition. A number of writers also write of the need not just for *virtuosic performers* but also *virtuosic listeners* who can respond adequately to the demands of experimental music.<sup>60</sup>

Composer and musician Pauline Oliveros is a highly influential proponent for the development of the ability to listen. She describes her *Deep Listening* methodology as “listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what one is doing.”<sup>61</sup> Motivated by a desire to “use listening as a pathway to heightened consciousness”, Oliveros has developed a series of exercises to train participants at the Deep Listening Institute to become Deep Listening Practitioners.<sup>62</sup> Oliveros is particularly interested in expanding musicians’ ability to listen, noting that:

Many musicians were not listening to what they were performing. There was good hand-eye coordination in reading music, but listening was not necessarily a part of the performance. The musician was of course hearing but...there was a disconnection from the environment that included the audience as the music was played.<sup>63</sup>

More directly influential on my work, Canadian composer and educationalist R. Murray Schafer also developed a process for increasing sensitivity to sound and awareness of the process of listening through what he terms *Ear Cleaning* exercises. He defines this as “a systematic program for training the ears to listen more discriminately to sounds, particularly those of the environment.”<sup>64</sup> The exercises are also important for musicians. He writes:

Before ear training it should be recognized that we require ear cleaning. Before we train a surgeon to perform delicate operations we first ask him to get into the habit of washing his hands. Ears also perform delicate operations and therefore ear cleanliness is an important prerequisite for all music listening and music playing.<sup>65</sup>

Ear cleaning exercises included instructions such as: “try to pass a sheet of paper throughout the class silently. Everybody listen for the sounds of the paper being passed.”<sup>66</sup> As students focus on trying to be silent, they become aware of the many incidental almost imperceptible sounds that surround us. Other exercises instructed students to “find an interesting sound” and “find a

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<sup>60</sup> Kouvaras, p.29. Footnote 37: “See Cox and Warner, ‘Experimental Musics’, and Michael Nyman, ‘Towards (a Definition of) Experimental Music’, *Audio Culture*, eds Cox and Warner, pp. 209–21”

<sup>61</sup> P. Oliveros quoted on the website of the Deep Listening Institute. <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about> (accessed 13/3/2015).

<sup>62</sup> L. Kouvaras, *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age*, UK, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013, p.29.

<sup>63</sup> P. Oliveros, *Deep Listening: a Composer's Sound Practice*, New York, iUniverse, 2005, p. xvii.

<sup>64</sup> R. M. Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester, Vermont, Destiny Books, 1994, p.272.

<sup>65</sup> R. M. Schafer, *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course*, Toronto, Clark & Cruikshank, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid* p.8.

contrasting sound”.<sup>67</sup> Heavily influenced by Cage, Schafer asked music students to consider statements such as “silence is a container into which a musical event is placed.”<sup>68</sup>

My original intention in the sculptural percussion research covered in this exegesis was to create a listening experience for the audience that would open their ears to subtle sound as a kind of reconfigured Schaferian ear cleaning exercise. Schafer sought to increase awareness of the broader environmental soundscape including natural and manufactured sounds, which surrounds us. He asks, “is the soundscape of the world an indeterminate composition over which we have no control, or are we its composers and performers, responsible for giving it form and beauty?”<sup>69</sup> In contrast, my interest in sculptural percussion is more specifically to sensitise people not so much to the sound around them but to the sound created in their interactions with the objects in their daily lives: the cup hitting the saucer, the key in the lock. Through engaging with an intimate subtle performance of the musicians making sound with the sculptures, I hope audiences will leave with an increased alertness to their own sound-making as they interact with the physical world. I will term the listening experience of sculptural percussion *focussed listening*. It develops from the preparation of the audience through their unexpected journey to the performance space, through the close proximity of audience to musician and through the subtlety of sound created by the carefully observed manipulation of sculptures. I see focussed listening as continuing the tradition of heightened listening described above but much more specifically tasked with increasing awareness of the connection between action and sound. Warren Burt writes of the way “the metaphorical fugue of our consciousness works on several levels at once, and how one can, given the right conditions, direct and guide that consciousness in order to enhance the experience of our listenings to the world.”<sup>70</sup> This exegesis details a series of works that attempt to direct the consciousness of both audience and musician to heighten their experience of listening. These works exist in the space between sculpture and percussion, between musician and audience, drawing on research into collaboration, proxemics, site specificity and ritual in performance.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid p.7.

<sup>69</sup> [original emphasis], R.M. Schafer, 1994, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Burt, 2009.

## Chapter 1 – Boxes and Found Objects



Figure 6. & 7. Joy, *Beauty Boxes* (2008), presented in *The Listening Museum* by Ensemble Offspring & Clocked Out Claire Edwardes and Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion) photos: Oliver Miller

In this chapter, the use of boxes and found objects in sculpture and percussion will be introduced through a discussion of the sculptural percussion project *Beauty Boxes*, a work commissioned by Sydney company Ensemble Offspring.<sup>71</sup> The percussive sculptures for *Beauty Boxes* are two hand-crafted wooden jewellery boxes, each with three drawers filled with found objects. The work operates at the nexus of the aural and visual with the box providing a structure to the composition, which unfolds as the musicians open each drawer in turn and explore the sound world within.

In the following excerpt from her book *On Listening*, percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson writes about *Beauty Boxes*, which she performed with Claire Edwardes as part of *The Listening Room*, a “two hour site-specific investigation of sound” at Urban Arts Project, Brisbane:

The large dusty enormity of a factory seems overwhelming and hidden up barely lit stairs is a door to another world – the boardroom. Set half way along the table which might seat twelve, are two women with wooden boxes in front of them. Boxes that could be magic boxes, which need certain tenacity from the opener, to, indeed open them. They sit in silence as the audience gathers, and then do indeed start tapping the boxes. Then rubbing, then knocking until a draw rumbles open and out come things. A metal scourer, that in the candlelight seems at first like a bejewelled rock; tiny beads, a pincushion, a piece of fine silk cloth. All industriously investigated by the

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<sup>71</sup> *Beauty Boxes* by Rosemary Joy, commissioned and premiered by Sydney based Ensemble Offspring (Claire Edwardes and Bree Van Reyk) as part *To the Max* a concert at Carriageworks in 2008. The work was later performed by Edwardes and Vanessa Tomlinson in Brisbane at Urban Arts Projects and in Sydney at Paddington Uniting Church as part of *The Listening Museum* in 2013.

two women eager to sound even the most banal of objects with respect and deep understanding.<sup>72</sup>

The act of taking a mundane object and making it into art has a rich history and is associated most notably with the work of Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp's *readymades* asserted that any object could be conceived of as art. According to Kantian theorist Theiry de Duve, the *readymades* are usually understood as both “a joke and test” in reference to the definition of art.<sup>73</sup> However, on closer reading of Duchamp's own words, it is clear that his intention was not merely provocative or humorous: by presenting a urinal as an exhibit and naming it *Fountain*, Duchamp says he “took an ordinary article of life, and placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – creating a new thought for that object.”<sup>74</sup> He argued that his work was not “anti-art”. According to Schwenger, Duchamp's focus was on detaching the object from its function until it was “empty of everything”, that is, empty of its function as equipment.<sup>75</sup> In *The Systems of Objects*, Baudrillard differentiates objects according to their function. An object has only two functions: it is either to be used or to be possessed. He writes:

A utensil is never possessed, because a utensil refers one to the world; what is possessed is always an object abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject.<sup>76</sup>

In separating the found object from its intended use, the artist creates a space in which a new meaning for it can be discovered, in which the object is “brought into relationship with the subject.”<sup>77</sup> This process of abstraction is in operation in *Beauty Boxes*. The sewing needle is not used to sew; it is used to make sound while gently pricking a small mound of fabric. The beads are not used for a necklace, they are swirled in a small drawer to create a visual and sonic effect. The pot scourer in *Beauty Boxes*, mentioned above by Vanessa Tomlinson, at first glance could be an expensive purse or ornament nestled in a drawer. Even on closer inspection, its original function is still not apparent. The object is rectangular, seemingly delicately made from golden metallic fabric. It gleams under the lights. Through the performance, the object's sonic potential is revealed but even in the moment of being used by a percussionist to make sound in a musical performance, the pot scourer could not be called a musical instrument. However, it has been

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<sup>72</sup> Vanessa Tomlinson, *On Listening, The Museum of Listening, and the Listening Museum*, from unpublished book about contemporary music in Brisbane, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> T. de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1998, p. 378.

<sup>74</sup> M. Duchamp, ‘The Richard Mutt Case’, *The Blind Man 2*, New York, May, 1917, p. 5, quoted in eds. K. Stiles & P. Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Source Book of Artists' Writings*, University of California Press, London, 1996, p. 817.

<sup>75</sup> P. Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> J. Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* by (first published as *Le Système des Objets*, 1968), translated by James Benedict, London, Verso, 1996, p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

transformed by the context in which it is presented, by the performance setting and by the hand-crafted wooden box in which it sits to become an object of sculptural percussion.

### Boxes as frames

*Beauty Boxes* consists of two handcrafted boxes, each with three drawers. The boxes are an ordering device and “frame” for the found objects within them. In *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*, McEvilley writes “the aesthetics of the box has been a major but largely unacknowledged element in the twentieth-century exploration of forms between painting and sculpture or including both.”<sup>78</sup> In his series *Boîtes en Valise*, Duchamp explored “the idea of boxes containing traces of the past, of thought and its outcomes”.<sup>79</sup> Photos, drawings and miniature replicas of readymades, including *Fountain*, were placed in boxes and compartments within leather suitcases as ‘portable museums’.<sup>80</sup> David Hopkins sees the *Boîtes en Valise* as a “succinct declaration of the artist’s right to function as curator, cataloguer, and travelling salesman of his oeuvre.”<sup>81</sup> He traces an inspiration for the work to the Northern European tradition of *Wunderkammers* or cabinets of curiosities.<sup>82</sup> *Wunderkammers* were idiosyncratic collections of objects assembled by aristocratic patrons and naturalists and intended to represent a ‘*theatrum mundi*’ or theatre of the world.<sup>83</sup> In his important study of curiosity, Krzysztof Pomian describes the *Wunderkammer* as a collection with:

Encyclopaedic ambitions, intended as a miniature version of the universe, containing specimens of every category of things and helping to render visible the totality of the universe, which otherwise would remain hidden from human eyes.<sup>84</sup>

The personal interests of the collector, at times motivated by a belief in magical properties of objects, often resulted in somewhat chaotic collections in overflowing cabinets.<sup>85</sup> When an understanding of the original rationale, whether mystical or alchemical, for the collection has been lost, the collections can seem random.<sup>86</sup> The compartments and drawers of the cabinet itself provide the only organising system that appears to be in operation.<sup>87</sup> From this perspective, it is possible to see Instagram as a kind of 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Wunderkammer* with the App format providing a structure to a series of random images that don’t represent the world as much as the self. If *Beauty Boxes* is considered as a *Wunderkammer*, the selection of objects in the work

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<sup>78</sup> T. McEvilley, *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*, New York, Alworth Press, 1999, p.152.

<sup>79</sup> J. Mack, *The Art of Small Things*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 2007, p.82.

<sup>80</sup> E. Bonk, *Marcel Duchamp: the Portable Museum*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1989, p.1.

<sup>81</sup> D. Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 168.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid* p.168.

<sup>83</sup> E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, London, Routledge 1992, p.80.

<sup>84</sup> K. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, quoted in Carla Yanni, *Nature’s Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1999, p.16.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid* p.16.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid* p. 19.

<sup>87</sup> Hopkins, p. 169.

could seem confusing until seen in performance. The careful placement and manipulation of the objects by the musicians' actions create an internal logic in an otherwise fairly arbitrary collection; the musicians' actions create a structure for the work that the audience can follow. If the found objects in this work are considered a 'collection', it is not one that can be added to. The work is a closed system with only one possible outcome – the performance.

Baudrillard writes of the motive for collecting as a manifestation of the “passionate abstractness of possession”, a result of alienation:<sup>88</sup>

It is because he feels himself alienated or at least lost within a social discourse whose rules he cannot fathom that the collector is drawn to construct an alternative discourse that is for him entirely amenable, in so far as he is the only one who dictates its signifiers – the ultimate signified being in the final analysis, none other than himself<sup>89</sup>

A number of writers have seen this kind of pathology in the life and works of Joseph Cornell whose exquisite, frozen miniature dioramas bestowed preciousness on found objects through their careful positioning in wooden boxes. Cornell's use of found objects and boxes was quite different to that of his friend and mentor Duchamp. For Cornell, the box became a way to control and contain, a process that seemed in opposition to the spontaneous elements in his assemblages.<sup>90</sup> Robert Hughes writing on Cornell's work notes that the “glass, the 'fourth wall' of his miniature theatre, is also the diaphragm between two contrasting worlds. Outside, chaos, accident, and libido, the stuff of unprotected life; inside, sublimation, memory, and peace.”<sup>91</sup> Whereas Duchamp's boxes open out, releasing their contents to be adjusted and displayed in elaborate configurations, Cornell's boxes seal a small perfectly arranged universe inside. As John Mack writes in *The Art of Small Things*, Cornell's boxes “contain consolation, a promise of tranquillity, a world of fragments rescued from the turmoil of the external world to become satisfying memory.”<sup>92</sup>

Cornell used found objects to create emotional and surreal dreamscapes with the aesthetic properties of each article dictating the choices that he made. Duchamp's work with found objects, on the other hand, sought to detach art from aesthetics. His choice of mass produced objects was part of an anti-aesthetic approach that favoured objects that were anonymous and unremarkable. In a talk given at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, he said “the choice of these *readymades* was never dictated by aesthetic delectation. The choice was based on a

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<sup>88</sup> Baudrillard, p. 92.

<sup>89</sup> Baudrillard, p. 84.

<sup>90</sup> J-R Falcetta, 'Acts of Containment: Marianne Moore, Joseph Cornell, and the Poetics of Enclosure', *Journal of Modern Literature*, Indiana University Press, Vol 29, No. 4, Summer, 2006, p. 124.

<sup>91</sup> R. Hughes, *American Visions*, London, Harvill, 1997, p. 234.

<sup>92</sup> Mack, *ibid* p. 80.

reaction of visual indifference and, at the same time, on the complete absence of good or bad taste.”<sup>93</sup> Duchamp’s anti-aesthetic approach was very influential and his move to New York during World War One introduced his ideas to American artists and composers. Postmodernism, with its awareness of the political and social contexts within which pronouncements about beauty were made, dismantled the concern of nineteenth-century artists with beauty.<sup>94</sup> However, by the late twentieth century, American literary critic Fredric Jameson identified what he termed “the return of aesthetics” in contemporary art.<sup>95</sup> Just as in earlier periods, when writers like Oscar Wilde used concepts of beauty to attack materialistic bourgeois attitudes, Jameson argues it is possible and important to acknowledge “beauty’s subversive role in a society marred by nascent commodification.”<sup>96</sup> In a similar spirit, *Beauty Boxes* was conceived as a meditation on beauty. It sought to bestow preciousness on mass-produced objects made by anonymous Chinese factory workers, giving as much dignity to their work as to the hand-crafted box constructed by the artist. Cheap, disposable materials have been carefully selected and positioned in the boxes. The objects are transformed and made beautiful by their setting in the polished boxes and through their reverential handling by the musicians. The inexpensive materials purchased from the haberdashery and supermarket are made to appear precious by the frame of the performance and boxes in which they are presented to the audience. The lustrous surfaces of the wooden boxes and the delicate manipulations by the musicians provide a context in which these found objects can be found to have meaning.

### **Percussion and Found Objects**

Since the early twentieth century, new sonic percussive worlds have been created using found objects. In *The Percussionist’s Art: Same Bed Different Drum*, percussionist Steven Schick writes that in Western classical tonal music, percussion usually functioned as a timekeeper and to indicate disruption and unacceptable states.<sup>97</sup> In the twentieth century, percussion broke out of these shackles to become a new force in contemporary music. Compositions by Varèse, Stockhausen, Ferneyhough, Xenakis and others expanded the range of possibility. Cage wrote of the liberating dimension of percussion: “percussion music is revolution. Sound and rhythm have too long been submissive to the restrictions of nineteenth-century music. Today we are fighting

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<sup>93</sup> M. Duchamp, ‘Apropos of “Readymades”’, talk delivered by Duchamp at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Oct 19, 1961. Published in *Art and Artists*, London, 1, no. 4, July 1966, p. 47. It was not easy, however, to change the viewing public’s quest for beauty. In a letter to artist Hans Richter, he wrote that he aimed “to discourage aesthetics...I threw the bottle rack and the urinal in their faces and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty.”, 1962, quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1965, pp. 207-208.

<sup>94</sup> T. Ross, ‘Art in the “Post-Medium” Era: Aesthetics and Conceptualism in the Art of Jeff Wall’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 101, Number 3, Summer 2002, pp.556.

<sup>95</sup> F. Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern (1983-1998)*, Verso, London, 1998, p. 102.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid* p. 134.

<sup>97</sup> S. Schick, *The Percussionist’s Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*, NY, USA, University of Rochester Press, 2006, p.14-16.

for their emancipation.”<sup>98</sup> Schick delineates what he calls the first generation of contemporary percussion, compositions that featured “a kind of percussive Noah’s Ark” laden with massive set ups resulting, ultimately, in a saturation of sound and a series of similar sounding works.<sup>99</sup> What he calls the second-generation of composers in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, explored a much more refined and limited palette resulting in specialised percussive projects exploring distinct areas of sound.<sup>100</sup> My work in the field that I term *sculptural percussion* flows in the wake of those waves of experimentation. I focus particularly on expanding the parameters of percussion to include micro-sounds made on sculptures staged within an intimate performance format.

The incursion of found objects into percussion was triggered by Dadaist influences. One of the earliest examples is George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique*, named after a 1917 drawing by Francis Picabia, with instrumentation including a siren and airplane propellers in addition to six pianos and orchestral percussion instruments. Originally conceived as the soundtrack to a film of the same name by Dadaist Fernand Léger, the work was premiered as a Dada spectacle conducted by Eugene Goossens at Carnegie Hall in 1927, with disastrous results.<sup>101</sup> According to Donald Fried, the concert producer and publicist:

The first few minutes of the Ballet went off smoothly and the audience listened to it carefully. And then came the moment for the wind machine to be turned on and all hell, in a minor way, broke loose [when the fan gained full speed]. People clutched their programs, and women held onto their hats with both hands. Someone in the direct line of the wind tied a handkerchief to his cane and waved it wildly in the air in a sign of surrender.<sup>102</sup>

The audience burst out laughing when the siren was cranked wildly but made no sound. The piece ended with the siren finally emitting a wail, which drowned out the applause and the sound of the audience as they left the concert hall.<sup>103</sup> The event was widely ridiculed and destroyed Antheil’s career in America.

Edgar Varèse’s *Ionisation* was ground-breaking, both as a work for percussion without other instrumentation and in its inclusion of non-standard sounds made from found objects such as a whip and sirens. His music was revolutionary and was influenced by elements of Dada practice

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<sup>98</sup> Cage, *Silence*, p. 87.

<sup>99</sup> Schick, p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> S. Schick, OJAI Music Festival Online University, video 1 ‘Solo Percussion is such a young sport’ <http://www.ojaiu.org/2015/03/ojaiu-2015-class-4-hitting-things-a-vocabulary-and-language/>

<sup>101</sup> C. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 73

<sup>102</sup> D. Friede, *The Mechanical Angel: His Adventures and Enterprises in the Glittering 1920’s*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948 pp 60-61, quoted in Oja, p. 71.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

and by close personal connection with the New York Dadaists.<sup>104</sup> According to Beatrice Wood, Varèse spoke in 1916 in Dadaist terms of “wanting to make music of the streets, the sounds of the streetcars, the bells on horses.”<sup>105</sup> However, in a letter to a PhD candidate Thomas Greer in 1965, he writes,

I have been called a Futurist, a Dadaist, a Cubist – erroneously I believe. I have always avoided groups and isms...As for the Dada movement, I had several Dadaist friends. [Tristan] Tzara and Marcel Duchamp among them. However, in music I was not interested in tearing down but in finding for myself new means by which I could compose with sounds outside the tempered system that existing instruments could not play. Unlike the Dadaists, I was not an iconoclast.<sup>106</sup>

Olivia Mattis argues that Varèse’s close involvement with Dada is irrefutable, citing numerous diary entries, letters and publications that show his active engagement. She posits that he may have been unwilling to be associated with the group in later life as he wished to be considered a serious composer, which a connection with Dada may have undermined.<sup>107</sup>

Composer Henry Cowell facilitated the premiere of *Ionisation* at Carnegie Hall in 1933 and later published the work. Cowell was a key figure in promoting the use of found objects in percussion. Composer Lou Harrison remembers

Henry’s adventurous promotion of automobile junkyards for the findings of new sounds. It is to him that I attribute the use of brake drums, both as bells and sharp metallic sounds (struck in the axle holes). In a very real sense, Henry’s suggestions were charmingly wicked for, in effect, he offered a way of simply bypassing the establishment altogether. Indeed, John Cage and I adopted all sorts of sounds from forays into out-of-the-way sources and, if we wanted too, we invented new instruments for our pieces.<sup>108</sup>

There was a complex relationship between Cowell and Cage. However, there is no doubt that the Cowell influenced Cage on many of the key principles of his work including found objects and indeterminacy.<sup>109</sup> Cage’s use of found objects was radical and included a piece for amplified cactus and another for blender and vegetables.<sup>110</sup> His most influential work *4’33”*

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<sup>104</sup> O. Mattis, ‘Varèse and Dada’ in J. Leggio (ed.), *Music and Modern Art*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 155.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Beatrice Wood to Livia Mattis, January 16, 1988 cited in Mattis, p. 145.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Edgard Varèse to Thomas H. Greer, August 15, 1965, Otto Luening Collection New York Public Library cited in Mattis, p. 129.

<sup>107</sup> Mattis, p. 155.

<sup>108</sup> L. Harrison, ‘Learning from Henry’, in *The Whole World of Music: A Henry Cowell Symposium*, ed. David Nicholls, Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997, p.165.

<sup>109</sup> L. Miller, ‘Henry Cowell and John Cage: Intersections and Influences, 1933–1941’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 2006, p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> J. Cage, *Child of Tree* (1975) for amplified plant materials and *0’00”* (1965) for blender, vegetables and contact microphone.

comprised the incidental sounds heard by the audience during a period of silence. Generally discussed in relation to Cage's investigation into the nature of silence, I would also argue that 4'33" is an extreme form of sound-making through found objects. In this case, the found objects are not played by a musician; they are assembled into a composition by the audience as they hear them within the designated time period. As the audience hears the sounds in their environment such as traffic, bird noises, rustling papers in the course of the four minutes and thirty three seconds of the piece, the objects that make them become by chance, found objects, which create the music that is heard.

Cage's music composition course at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1958 inspired composers and artists to experiment with making sound using found objects. Cage taught a mix of Zen Buddhism and Duchampian Dada to inspire students to use the concept of *readymades* to explore the integration of art and life.<sup>111</sup> Cage's students included Dick Higgins and George Brecht who went on to be key artists in Fluxus.<sup>112</sup> Fluxus inspired works reveals the scope of experimentation to create sound: *Repertoire* (1970) by composer Mauricio Kagel include an ostentatious and extensive array of found objects including a Voting Booth enclosure, tennis balls, a Flagpole base and an Orthopedic shoe. Fluxist artist Alison Knowles created *Gentle Surprises for the Ear* (1975) with Philip Corner and Bill Fontana. The work includes "fragments of discarded objects... a ten-inch 45rpm record broken in half, part of a brush or comb, two stick pins with white balls at the end, many unidentifiable objects."<sup>113</sup> Each object was accompanied by hand written instructions on how to play it.

All Fluxus performance events were defined as music no matter how divergent they may have been from a traditional notion of music. The text score was an essential characteristic. The score for Knowles' work *Make a Salad* (1962) read "make a salad" with no additional instructions.<sup>114</sup> Kouravas writes that,

Unlike traditional music scores that create a unidirectional power flow from composer to performer, text scores rather dissipate and diffuse control, authority and power in a multidirectional fashion that encompasses, composer, performer...and audience.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> S. Hobbs, *The End of the American Avant Garde*, NYU Press, 2000, p. 68.

<sup>112</sup> Philip Auslander, 'Fluxus Art-Amusement: the Music of the Future?' in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-garde: Performance and Textuality*, edited by James Martin Harding, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p.112.

<sup>113</sup> K. Stiles, 'Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions', Schimmel, Paul (ed), *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1998, p. 233.

<sup>114</sup> A. Knowles, *Make a Salad*, first performed in 1962 at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London described in J. Robinson, 'The Sculpture of Indeterminacy: Alison Knowles's Beans and Variations', *Art Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 4, Winter, 2004, p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> Kouvaras, p. 66-7.

The text score operates as a template, which gives space for new elements to be incorporated in performance. Each performance can be quite different and contradicts the traditional role of the composer to pre-set the exact listening experience.<sup>116</sup> Despite mocking the seriousness of classical music, Fluxus continued to operate within its basic structures with the elements of composer, score and audience. However, the text score gave a freedom to collaborate that was quite unlike the prescriptive nature of the conventionally notated musical score.<sup>117</sup>

The score for *Beauty Boxes* is a set of written instructions. The musicians are given a series of tasks to carry out in manipulating the objects with a level of freedom to interpret and improvise on the instructions as they wished. The score includes poetic images for the musicians to keep in mind while they perform. Bachelard writes of the poetic image as making “the duality of subject and object...iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions.”<sup>118</sup> In *Beauty Boxes*, the poetic image is a secret not directly revealed to the audience, creating a private moment of contemplation for the musician as she moves the objects. The score asks for a drawer of tiny plastic amber beads to be shaken so that the beads looked like a herd of buffalo seen from the air. A piece of glossy satin fabric from the bargain bin bulges from one compartment with the musician instructed to touch it as though testing rising bread dough. This mental image is not shared with the audience, but is instead a secret held by the musician.<sup>119</sup> While the boxes ultimately reveal their contents, there is still an element of motivation that is hidden from the audience. This sense of secrecy and privacy is in keeping with Bachelard’s insights concerning the poetics of hidden spaces. He describes “the images of intimacy that are in harmony with drawers and chests, as also with all the other hiding-places in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets”<sup>120</sup> The instructions in the score are specific and yet leave room for the musicians to experiment and improvise so that the piece can evolve from performance to performance.<sup>121</sup>

*Beauty Boxes* also connects to another Fluxus area of exploration: the Flux Box. The Flux Box was an extension and a reworking of the ideas developed in Duchamp’s *Boîtes en Valise* to create portable art that could exist outside galleries. Flux Boxes functioned as “miniature museum cabinets that democratized the experience of buying art as the editions were large and the prices low.”<sup>122</sup> Originally conceived as a fundraising and marketing idea by Brecht and Fluxus impresario George Maciunas, the Fluxus Yearbook Boxes were first released in 1963,

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<sup>116</sup> Robinson, p. 98.

<sup>117</sup> Auslander, p. 112.

<sup>118</sup> Bachelard p. xix.

<sup>119</sup> See Appendix 1 for full *Beauty Boxes* score with annotations by percussionist Claire Edwardes

<sup>120</sup> Bachelard p. 74.

<sup>121</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>122</sup> C. Lauf, ‘Fluxus soapbox’ in Welchman, John C. (ed.), *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 1988, p. 193

each one consisting of a wooden box containing a series of objects contributed by members of Fluxus.<sup>123</sup> The boxes were considered as *publications* rather than sculptures and so differed from other boxes being made by artists in the period such as Robert Morris' *Box with the Sound of its Own Making*, which was more influenced by Brancusi.<sup>124</sup> There was something of the chaos of the *Wunderkammer* about the Flux boxes:

The tactic of bunching everything together into a jumble has...been followed in the publication of the Fluxus Boxes, Kits and Year-books...By creating chaos one creates the illusion of a universe, and the individual parts of the universe can maintain their anonymity, independence and original dimension.<sup>125</sup>

The use of found objects in percussion is now so commonplace as to be unremarkable. Sandpaper blocks, glass bottles, cowbells and metal bowls are quite standard items in the contemporary composer's *instrumentarium* for percussion.<sup>126</sup> Frederick Rzewski's *To the Earth* (1985) performed on flowerpots is regularly included in the repertoire of percussion concerts. Liza Lim's *City of Falling Angels* (2007) includes a large array of instruments including a bucket of water, superball and beaters. *Beauty Boxes* stretches the parameters of percussion slightly with the suggestion of narrative as the work unfolds with the musicians disgorging and manipulating the boxes' contents. The boxes are both containers of sounds and of imagined memories. They are miniature *Wunderkammers* evoking sewing boxes, jewellery boxes and a child's collection of oddments and precious objects. In performance, *Beauty Boxes* looks somewhat like an exploded Flux Box.<sup>127</sup> In earlier percussive sculpture projects, the boxes were only containers or frames for found objects. *Beauty Boxes* marked a transition in my practice as the box itself becomes part of the playing field. The box becomes a stage for the musician's hands to perform on. All eyes are focussed on the musician's hands and the sight of sounds being created. The musician performs while opening up the box to reveal the objects and sounds within it.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> Lauf, p.185. Morris insisted he "was not informed about Fluxus".

<sup>125</sup> Henry Martin quoted in *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, pp. 191-2

<sup>126</sup> *Instrumentarium* is a term devised by percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson to describe the list of natural and manufactured objects the percussionist must find to perform a particular piece. V. Tomlinson, 'Music for the Banal, the Obvious, the Everyday: the Interrogation of the Object, an Eco-Acoustic Investigation', published in *Future Nature, Future Cultures*, peer-reviewed papers from the 2013 Balance-Unbalance International Conference, June 2013, [http://www.balance-unbalance2013.org/uploads/1/3/2/6/13266267/balance\\_unbalance\\_2013\\_full\\_papers\\_e-book\\_.pdf](http://www.balance-unbalance2013.org/uploads/1/3/2/6/13266267/balance_unbalance_2013_full_papers_e-book_.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> This observation was made about *System Building* by reviewer Geoffrey Gartner. See Appendix 12.

## Chapter 2 – Collaboration and Context



Figure 8. Joy, Pirrie, Young, *Ricefields* (1998), La Mama photo: Yatzek

In this chapter, I will explore the collaborative context in which the work *Yakumo Honjin* developed. In the shift from modernist to postmodern art, collaboration between artists in the creation of work has been a notable development, particularly from the 1970's onwards.<sup>128</sup> Grant Kester has argued that multiple global, social and economic upheavals from that period to the current day have resulted in a feeling of “imminent threat” which in turn has “animate[d] the remarkable profusion of contemporary art practices concerned with collective action and civic engagement.”<sup>129</sup> According to Charles Green in *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, many different types of collaboration have developed, from artist couples who “developed a third authorial identity effacing the individual artists themselves” to groups of artists who maintained some component of their individual authorship over their contribution to the project.<sup>130</sup> This move towards collaborative practice is the context within which the Melbourne based Aphids began creating work in the mid-1990's.

Aphids began in 1994 with a group of friends putting on an arts event in a private home. Led by composer David Young, the group included visual artist Sarah Pirrie, fashion designer Kath Banger and writer/musician Cynthia Troup. The early events were filled with gentle surprises and humour, underpinned by a commitment to experimentation into the nature of artistic collaboration

<sup>128</sup> C. Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. x.

<sup>129</sup> G. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, USA, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> Green p. xi.

across disciplines with a focus on contemporary music. The events were developed with a careful focus on the experience of the audience providing a convivial environment including food and drink that was linked thematically to the work. Founding member Cynthia Troup writes of the early projects: “it seems clear that the curators sought to cultivate this hospitable atmosphere as a means to enhance the experience of new music.”<sup>131</sup> As the years progressed, the company’s methodology for collaborating became more defined with the creative team starting from a shared source of inspiration, then working independently to create work that was in the final instance pulled together to create a cohesive whole.

In an interview, David Young elaborated on his approach to collaboration:

The most successful collaborations for me have two elements – one is where there is enormous trust between the artists and often that comes through working together many times...there is a strong element of trust which means as artists, we can make ourselves vulnerable to each other. The second element is clarity around roles. I don’t really like these collaborations where everyone is doing everything. It tends to get a bit grey, a bit muddy. And again, the more successful collaborations I’ve been involved in are where it’s very clear what each artist is bringing to the work. The collaboration is in the centre but we all come from our own practice.<sup>132</sup>

In 1998, I was invited to collaborate with Aphids on a project called *Ricefields*.<sup>133</sup> Led by then Aphids Artistic Director, composer David Young, *Ricefields* involved two visual artists (Sarah Pirrie and myself) and four musicians (Natasha Anderson, Deborah Kayser, Peter Humble and Yasutaka Hemmi). *Ricefields*, described by composer Juliana Hodkinson as “an uncategorisable experience”, explored the development of sculptural musical scores, using as a shared point of departure the floor plan for a Japanese temple, the Temple of the Healing Eyes.<sup>134</sup> The three lead collaborators divided the floor plan so that each had an abstract diagram as a foundation for their sculptures. We then worked separately taking quite different approaches. Sarah Pirrie created sculptures shaped like large pieces of sushi with microphones embedded inside so the musicians could create sound by manipulating them. David Young made works using a range of techniques from conventional music notation, text and graphic scores added to 3D forms including a Tshirt and an extendable 5 metre long fence pole on which was a graphic score which was performed by the musicians who walked along its length lighting it with a match as they went. I created a

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<sup>131</sup> C. Troup (ed.), *Sonorities of Site: Aphids, Architecture and New Music 1998–2010*, Melbourne, Aphids, 2012, p.19.

<sup>132</sup> David Young, interview on ABC Classic FM.

<sup>133</sup> Aphids project *Ricefields*, a collaboration between composer David Young and artists Sarah Pirrie and Rosemary Joy. Performed by Yasutaka Hemmi (violin), Natasha Anderson (recorder), Peter Humble (percussion) and Deborah Kayser (soprano) performed in 1998 at La Mama, Melbourne and in 1999 at Centre Choreographique, Belfort, France; Shimane Marine Gate, Matsue, Japan; Gallery 21, Ginza, Tokyo; MetroArts (Brisbane); and Performance Space (Sydney).

<sup>134</sup> Troup, p. 47.

series of sculptures from a range of materials based on the shapes and proportions of my section of the floor plan and then collaborated with the musicians on how best to interpret them as musical scores.

Taking the vertical axis as pitch and the horizontal as duration, the colour, texture and shape of the sculptures gave indication of dynamic and mood. Two resin sculptures became a duo for violin and recorder with the musicians translating the contours and textures of the pieces of charred wood and charred rope enclosed within the resin. A plastic box with a series of small compartments filled with multi-coloured shapes made from playdough, fabric and plastic became a work for solo violin with each compartment read as a bar of music. I also experimented with a graphic score, which developed after spending time with recorder player Natasha Anderson exploring the limits of what the recorder could do.<sup>135</sup>

On completing our independent sculptural works, David, Sarah and I reconvened to find a way to pull them together to create an installation and performance. *Ricefields* illustrates the model of collaboration used by Aphids where there was dialogue between the artists to establish a shared starting place followed by each working independently, at times in collaboration with the musicians who would perform the work, to create something within their own practice, whether music, sculpture or film. Before presenting the work to the public, the artists would come back together to create a cohesive installation / performance.

### ***Yakumo Honjin***

*Yakumo Honjin* was an Aphids collaboration that built on the methodology developed in *Ricefields*. Four of the artists and musicians from *Ricefields* went on to work on *Yakumo Honjin*, including violinist Yasutaka Hemmi who is from the Matsue area of far-West Japan which provided the inspiration for both works. Aphids project *Yakumo Honjin* is named after the building which inspired it – a feudal lord's hotel or *honjin* on Lake Shinji near Matsue. A long-term Aphids collaborator, Yasutaka established a connection with the owner, a descendant of the original family that built the honjin in 1733 during the Japanese Edo period (1603–1867) when select villages were required to provide a *honjin* or inn for travelling dignitaries.<sup>136</sup> When Yasutaka and Aphids Artistic Director David Young visited, the Yakumo Honjin was about to close as a tourist hotel. The owners were keen to maintain a public profile for the building so agreed to host a creative development for the project.

Over ten days during a short residency at Yakumo Honjin David Young (composer) and Peter Humble (filmmaker) and I, along with musicians Yasutaka Hemmi (violin), Takayo

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<sup>135</sup> For more detail about *Ricefields*, see Appendix 15.

<sup>136</sup> C. N. Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994, p. 22.

Matsumura (harp) and Eugene Ughetti (percussion) absorbed the history, design and atmosphere of the building. The building was labyrinthine with secret passageways, sliding doors and small chambers. As David Young said in an interview, “you had the feeling that you could keep turning a corner and never actually get to the centre of the building.”<sup>137</sup> The floor was covered with tatami mats and through the windows could be seen traditional gardens where each morning an elderly maid would rake the sand into patterns. The entrance chamber was quite dark with delicate wooden cabinets filled with many drawers. A grand room to the left was built specially for a visit by the Emperor for lunch one day in the 1920's. A large hall at one end had a mural of a large distorted green tree in front of an orange background.



Figures 9. & 10. images from *Yakumo Honjin* creative development, photos: David Young

The design of the *honjin* reflected the concept of *oku* which literally means “back, depth or hidden”.<sup>138</sup> This concept has been central to traditional Japanese architecture, design and gardens from as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>139</sup> The use of screens in a traditional building to create an “ambiguous and mysterious space” is an example of *oku*.<sup>140</sup> Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki introduced the concept to a Western audience, writing that “*oku* also has a number of abstract connotations, including profundity and unfathomability, so that the word is used to describe not only physical but psychological depth.”<sup>141</sup> He references Eiji Usami’s *The Inner*

<sup>137</sup> ‘Yakumo Honjin’ Australian Music [podcast], ABC Classic FM, 2012, (accessed 10 November 2014).

[http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/classic/australianmusic/amu\\_280720\\_m1903175.mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/classic/australianmusic/amu_280720_m1903175.mp3)

<sup>138</sup> B. Shelton, *Learning from the Japanese City: Looking East in Urban Design*, London, Taylor and Francis, 2012, p. 172.

<sup>139</sup> F. Maki, *Nurturing Dreams: Collected Essays on Architecture and the City*, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2008, p. 153.

<sup>140</sup> S. M. Mirmiran, ‘Comparative Analysis of Fumihiko Maki’s Works according to Japanese Traditions and Concepts’, *Research Journal of Recent Sciences* Vol. 3(1), January 2014, p. 64.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, p. 154.

*Labyrinth* “as one of the earliest essays on the sense of inwardness in Japanese space. Usami notes this inwardness in the mazelike effect produced by the winding corridors of Japanese-style inns found in tourist resorts and spas, buildings much more spacious inside than their unpretentious exteriors suggest.”<sup>142</sup>

The concept of *oku* and our experience of it, as we navigated our way through the building, informed the development of the project. Working independently, the three lead artists created material to be brought together for the performance/installation. Filmmaker Peter Humble took footage to edit for the video installation and David Young wrote a graphic notated score using watercolours, for violin, percussion and harp. I began formulating ideas for the development of three percussive sculptures inspired by the complex architecture of the honjin, the feeling of being inside a box within a box, stories of the Samurai and feudal lords visiting, arguing, dining, gambling. I also looked for a way to find legitimacy as a westerner in approaching this material. I visited a local museum honouring Lafcadio Hearn, a Greek expatriate writer who lived in Japan for the final fifteen years of his life, spending one year in Matsue where he married a local woman. Hearn was famous in Japan as a writer who could interpret the country for a Western audience. He also went by the name Yakumo and in the museum, there are a number of touching references to his regard for Japan: ‘Yakumo [Hearn] loved the Old Japan that has lived on since the Edo era. He loved its gentle heart that co-exists with nature, its sensibility in listening to the voices of the smallest things, its purity and honesty’.<sup>143</sup> Hearn wrote extensively about Japan for a Western audience and is particularly poetic when describing the sounds of Matsue:

The first of the noises of a Matsue day comes to the sleeper like the throbbing of a slow, enormous pulse exactly under his ear. It is a great, soft, dull buffet of sound - like a heartbeat in its regularity, in its muffled depth, in the way it quakes up through one's pillow so as to be felt rather than heard.<sup>144</sup>

He is described in a pamphlet from Matsue’s Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum as ‘a rare Western individual who was free from prejudice’. In her more critical reading of Hearn’s legacy, Rie Kido Askew argues that he was in fact, a much more complex character and was quite frank in some writings about his abhorrence of certain aspects of Japanese culture. She writes that the depictions of Hearn as “a sensitive folklorist who loved ‘Old Japan’” create “a narrative [that] also serves to promote a nostalgia about the past that is used to promote a moral rereading of Japan’s modernization.”<sup>145</sup> Working with images of fictionalised museum entries and imagined

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<sup>142</sup> Maki, p. 154.

<sup>143</sup> Museum note, Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum, Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture, Japan.

<sup>144</sup> L. Hearn, *Glimpses of an Unfamiliar Japan*, first published 1894, accessed online <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8130/pg8130.html>.

<sup>145</sup> R.K. Askew, ‘The Politics of Nostalgia: Museum Representations of Lafcadio Hearn in Japan’, *Museum and Society*, 5(3), Nov 2007, p. 137.

pasts, I decided to create three travel kits of the kind that one might find in Lafcadio Hearn's Museum or in a secret corner of the honjin itself, perhaps left there by a travelling dignitary. Made of wood, each travel kit is in the form of a box and looks identical when closed. When open, different configurations of compartments can be seen with different implements and objects in each.<sup>146</sup> The kits also drew on my memories as a child of seeing the compartment filled portable writing box that belonged to my great-grandfather's brother, a travelling dynamite salesman who was killed in an explosion in regional Victoria in the 1880's.

The game *Paper, Rock, Scissors* is mapped out in the *Yakumo Honjin* boxes. Still popular in Australian primary schools, the game dates back to 206 BC – 220 AD in China, before travelling to Japan in the mid 1700's, just after *Yakumo Honjin* was built. Variations on the game became very popular in Japan as drinking games, foreplay and as the means to make business decisions.<sup>147</sup> The current version of the game in Japan is called *Janken* and is very similar to the Western *Paper, Rock, Scissors*. The game is still used in Japan to resolve disputes and make decisions.<sup>148</sup>

### **Rock, Paper, Scissors**

The three boxes contain articles that resonate for me individually as souvenirs from actual experiences and collectively for the way they suggest a narrative connected with the building *Yakumo Honjin* and its past as I imagine it. Building on the idea of a distortion or confusion in a museum classification and the space between the actual and imagined past, I presented objects that appeared similar but had different functions such as the small dagger and nailfile, or seemed almost identical but were made from very different material such as the salt and sand. The difference in origin of the antique articles from Japan and Belgium find their own logic in the order of the boxes, just as the frame of the *Wunderkammer* worked to unify different objects.

### **Box 1 Scissors**

Box 1 contains one large compartment in which sit four metal implements: an antique metal nailfile, a small dagger and a large key, all purchased from an antique stall in Matsue. The fourth implement was a pair of Japanese scissors given to me by my parents for Christmas many years ago and salvaged by a friend for me when the house I was living in burnt down. She asked if

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<sup>146</sup> The *Yakumo Honjin* boxes are a development from *Field Kits*, a sculptural percussion work I developed with four miniature travelling percussion kits personalised for each member of *Playing Fields*, a percussion quartet (Graeme Leak, Vanessa Tomlinson, Peter Humble and David Hewitt) which performed several concerts in Melbourne from 2001-3.

<sup>147</sup> S. Linhart and S. Frühstück (eds), *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 324.

<sup>148</sup> In 2005, a Japanese businessman used the game to decide which auction house would sell his collection of Cézannes. Christies used strategy to win the game in one round (Scissors vs paper) against Sotheby's and was awarded the contract, resulting in a \$1.9 million commission when the paintings were sold.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/11051704/How-to-always-win-at-rock-paper-scissors.html>

there was anything I wanted to save from the wreckage of the house and I mentioned the scissors. She spent hours sifting through the ashes of my studio and came back with at least five pairs of scissors, several of which I did not know I owned. The Japanese scissors weren't among them. She went back and after an hour, came back with them. They still cut perfectly.



Figure 11. Scissors box, *Yakumo Honjin* (2009), photo: Daisy Noyes

### **Box 2 Rock**

Box 2 contains two boxes holding miniature sand gardens – one box filled with white sand, the other with salt. Two black pebbles resting in the sand give it the appearance of a miniature Japanese garden. The musicians are able to make a range of quiet sounds by scraping the pebbles against the sand.



Figure 12. Rock box, *Yakumo Honjin* (2009), photo: Daisy Noyes

### **Box 3 Paper**

Box 3 contains three compartments covered by sliding lids. The first compartment contains strips of coarse Japanese writing paper from a small notebook that David Young used to prepare the graphic scores for the piece the musicians played on the boxes. The second compartment contains antique wooden bingo discs, which were given to me by David who bought them from

the flea market in Brussels while visiting a mutual friend Marie-Hélène Elleboudt. (Marie-Hélène, David and I worked on an Aphids project in Brussels in 2004 and spent many hours searching through the flea market for materials). The third compartment contains writing nibs purchased from the same antique stall in Matsue.



Figure 13. Paper box, *Yakumo Honjin* (2009), photo: Daisy Noyes

The items from the Matsue antique stall that are contained in the boxes would not seem out of place at Lafcadio Hearn's museum. While the key is quite ornate, the other implements are roughly made – simple items for daily use. The scissors and bingo discs are both rich in associations for me. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart writes of “the capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experience.”<sup>149</sup> She was writing particularly of souvenirs, but the same could be said of any object we own. Each object brings to mind all our memories and associations connected with it, so that an old birthday gift, for example, will conjure up memories of the person who gave it to us. In *Yakumo Honjin*, the box then becomes a way to organise memories and ideas. The boxes become a kind of ‘theatre of memory’ referencing a lost work by Renaissance artist Giulio Camillo who created a portable cabinet, shaped in the form of the zodiac, in which objects could be placed as an aid to memory.<sup>150</sup> In *The Art of Small Things*, John Mack describes Camillo's theatre of memory as “the greatest image of a box as comforting microcosm.”<sup>151</sup> The *Yakumo Honjin* boxes serves as containers for memories and found objects, a means of arranging them, and of fixing relationships between them to create a small theatre in which meaning can be constructed. As Bachelard writes, “memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are”.<sup>152</sup> Arranged to draw out their associations to practical and imaginary worlds, the found objects in the *Yakumo Honjin* boxes resonate with memories,

<sup>149</sup> S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 9th edition, Duke University Press, USA, 1993, p. 135.

<sup>150</sup> Wilder, L. P., *Shakespeare's Memory Theatre: Recollection, Properties, and Character*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 53.

<sup>151</sup> Mack, 2007, p. 80.

<sup>152</sup> G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts, Beacon Paperback, 1994, p. 9.

associations and sound as they are put into motion and taken into the world of performance. In *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, Peter Schwenger writes of the way “accumulating associations and experiences as they pass through various hands, [objects] become the custodians of narratives.”<sup>153</sup> The narrative that I imagined around the boxes (as travel kits owned by traveling Samurai) was not apparent in the music played, which was abstract and textural. The boxes were not played with mallets or sticks. Instead, the musicians played the surfaces of the boxes with their fingers and manipulated the objects in their hands to create sounds. Speaking of the project, percussionist Eugene Ughetti said that the most interesting aspect of the work is that the boxes are visual art objects as well as musical objects, which starts “to excite my imagination about how I can extract a sound that might be extra-musical or may function in two ways.”<sup>154</sup>

The work was presented in 2009 at Karakoro Art Studio, Matsue, Japan and Taiko Yagura, Matsue Castle, Japan; and in 2010 in Melbourne at WestSpace Gallery, in Sydney at Elizabeth Bay House and at KickArts Contemporary Arts in Cairns for the On Edge Festival. In each venue, the audience was invited to wander around the installation/performance, with the harp, violin and percussion and video situated around the space. There were three tatami mats with one of the percussive sculpture boxes in the middle of each. The two musicians played each box in turn to one audience member at a time who kneeled in front of them.<sup>155</sup> My contribution to the score was to specify that each performance begin with the opening of the box and end with its closing so that each audience member had the complete experience of the items in the box being unveiled. At two-minute intervals, when each piece was finished, the musicians carefully replaced the lid on the box and moved to the next one. The score was developed following a series of workshops in Japan in which David Young and the two musicians Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott each experimented with the boxes in turn to find ten interesting sounds to share with the others. David then selected from these to develop the score.<sup>156</sup> For the presentation connected with this exegesis, only the sculptural percussion component was presented.

Indonesian ethnomusicologist Rizaldi Siagan was a particular inspiration for David Young in developing performance/installations as settings for new music:

In Rizaldi’s view, ‘music is nothing’ because it has no inherent meaning. It becomes... capable of signifying ‘something’ when the listener is given some context; when the

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<sup>153</sup> Schwenger, p. 22.

<sup>154</sup> ‘Yakumo Honjin’ Australian Music [podcast], ABC Classic FM, 2012, (accessed 10 November 2014). [http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/classic/australianmusic/amu\\_280720\\_m1903175.mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/classic/australianmusic/amu_280720_m1903175.mp3)

<sup>155</sup> For the examination presentation for this PhD, three musicians performed the work for the three examiners simultaneously.

<sup>156</sup> See Appendix 8 for the *Yakumo Honjin* score

audience has some sense of the anticipated purpose of performance, the place, space, and occasion that are pertinent.<sup>157</sup>

The musical component of *Yakumo Honjin* does not have meaning in isolation. The ABC FM podcast created about the work illustrates that without the experience of being in the room, the music is hard to fathom. It is only when placed in a context with the video installation and the percussive sculptures that it begins to have meaning. When *Yakumo Honjin* is experienced within the performance installation, the audience is constantly tugged away from the aspect of the work they are viewing at any one moment: “they might see the sculpture but hear the harp around the corner and want to see that. The work is never in one place and has to be constantly navigated so the core of the work is also hidden. You can’t sit anywhere and see it all.”<sup>158</sup>

The percussive sculptures created for this work illustrate another form of collaboration: that between an artist who conceives and designs the artwork and a craftsman who constructs it. Whereas in *Beauty Boxes*, I constructed the boxes myself, for *Yakumo Honjin*, I commissioned carpenter Adam Stewart to make the boxes to my design.<sup>159</sup> Michael Petry in *The Art of Not Making: The New Artist/Artisan Relationship* calls the phenomenon of a craftsman constructing an artwork to an artist’s specification in the contemporary period ‘the modern fabricator’.<sup>160</sup> He argues that Duchamp’s *Fountain* heralded a new kind of separation of the artist from the construction of the artwork and that this was quite distinct from the earlier role of the assistant who helped with the construction of artworks in the period from the Renaissance to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>161</sup> Prominent artists such as Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Ai Weiwei are well known for employing assistants to make their work. At times, there is a deeper meaning behind this, for example Ai Weiwei’s critique of Communism in *Seeds* uses the labour of anonymous Chinese artisans. However, in some cases, it may also be that working with an artisan may simply be the best way to realise the design. As artist Jan Fabre says “I only use craftsmen on work I cannot produce myself, or that needs specific techniques, materials or know-how I do not possess. I’m very keen on making things with my own hands. But sometimes you need professionals.”<sup>162</sup>

My motive for involving Adam Stewart in the production of the boxes was partly the result of wanting a finish and complexity in the boxes that I couldn’t realise unaided and partly to

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<sup>157</sup> David Young quoted in D. Young & C. Troup ‘David Young: Producing Uncertainty’, *Contemporary Music Review*, Volume 25 Part 4, 2006, p. 380.

<sup>158</sup> ‘Yakumo Honjin’ Australian Music [podcast], ABC Classic FM.

<sup>159</sup> I have commissioned Adam Stewart previously to construct boxes and structures for a number of projects including *Schallmaschine 06*.

<sup>160</sup> M. Petry, *The Art of Not Making: The New Artist/Artisan Relationship*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid* p. 7

<sup>162</sup> M. Petry, ‘Artisans who turn ideas into art: Who Pickled Damien Hirst’s Shark and Painted Ai Weiwei’s Seeds?’, 29 April 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/artisans-who-turn-ideas-into-art-who-pickled-damien-hirsts-shark-and-painted-ai-weiweis-seeds-2276036.html>, (accessed 9 March 2015).

reference the kind of individualised wooden objects that I came across in the honjin and the Lafcadio Hearn Museum. I imagined that these objects would have been made by a local carpenter to the precise specifications of the owner. However, by involving a collaborator to realise my vision, I found myself uncertain about how to claim ownership of my role in the work. Kester writes of the “ambivalence, the semantic slippage between positive and negative connotations” of the word ‘collaboration’, noting its associations with Vichy France. Alternative words also have negative connotations: “collectivity evokes associations of forced labour camps, even as cooperation leads us through a chain of association to ‘cooperative’ witnesses and a complicitous submission to authority.” Kester continues that on “the continuum of terms we use for working together, each carries with it a counter meaning: a warning, so to speak, of its ethical undecidability.”<sup>163</sup>

Collaboration can also carry with it an element of risk to an artist’s individual practice. How is intellectual property shared in collaboration? In the style of collaboration used in Aphids under David Young’s artistic directorship, it would seem at first glance that this would not be an issue as each artist worked mostly independently. However, on closer examination, there are some more complex considerations. For example, I designed the boxes and arranged all their internal elements; the boxes themselves were made by Adam Stewart. While David Young wrote the music, the musicians contributed ideas on how to play the boxes which also prescribed what could be played by their contents and also by my wish that each performance on each box began with the lid being opened and ended with the lid being closed. The score created by David included a watercolour and a list of instructions for each box. While the instructions are detailed, there is a looseness in the abstract watercolour score that gives significant latitude to the musician to make decisions as they played. The element of collaboration integral to the overall framing of the project is there even in the small details of the work. Interestingly, despite the space for musician choice in performing the work, the set parameters of the score ensure the effect is much the same for each performance.

The issue of collaboration and intellectual property has presented more pressing concerns for the current Aphids Artistic Director, Willoh S. Weiland. Her approach to collaboration has been quite different from Young, with the artist who has developed the initial idea taking the role as lead artist with the final say over the work. The rest of the collaborators assist to bring the vision to fruition. In this model, where ideas are tossed back and forth on the rehearsal floor, the question of ownership of the work and how to acknowledge the respective contributions and responsibilities of collaborators has needed to be discussed a number of times. There is a tension for each member of the company in wanting to work collaboratively while also

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<sup>163</sup> Kester p. 2.

maintaining their reputation as a solo artist. In time, this model has evolved so that the lead artist is more clearly in control of the project and the other collaborators' roles are more distinctly defined as assistants.

Collaboration has been identified as a late stage of conceptualist art that deconstructs the role of the artist while also pulling apart what Green describes as the “exaggerated, highly stressed, binary relationships between the visual and anti-visual and between imagination and memory.”<sup>164</sup> Collaboration loosens the boundaries of each individual artist's terrain. In *Yakumo Honjin*, the sculptor suggests parameters for the musical score. The composer chooses the inspiration for the video works. The process of collaboration extends the scope of each artist's practice by engaging with others from different disciplines in a mode that can be described as *interdisciplinary, hybrid* or *cross artform*. These terms are often used interchangeably. The Australia Council for the Arts categorises *cross artform* as a distinct artform with *experimental practice* listed as the genre subset.<sup>165</sup>

Collaborating across disciplines breaks down not only the rigid demarcations of an individual arts practice, but also brings about a fluidity in artform. *Yakumo Honjin* is a performance event and an installation that can exist in a gallery or performance setting. There is a subtlety and ease in the interplay between all the elements of the work. However, this is not always the case as Barthes' oft-quoted phrase suggests: “interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security”.<sup>166</sup> The violent breaking down of old disciplines in “the interests of a new object and a new language” can result in some unruly hybrid works of art.<sup>167</sup> When collaboration leads to an outcome in which the beauty and skill of the individual artists' work is lost in a melange of collective agreement, it is time to change tack. The most successful collaborations, in my view, are those in which there is space for each collaborator to contribute their unique vision and in doing so broaden their frame of reference. When artists from a range of disciplines collaborate on projects like *Yakumo Honjin* which involved a filmmaker, composer and artist, an experience of the intermingling of the senses is a natural outcome.

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<sup>164</sup> Green p. 197

<sup>165</sup> When applying for a grant to the Australia Council for the Arts, these categories appear on the online form. At the time of writing the future of the Australia Council's support for experimental arts practice is very much in doubt with severe funding cuts being forced by Arts Minister George Brandis through the establishment of a National Program for Excellence using a large proportion of Australia Council funding.

<sup>166</sup> R. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Great Britain, Fontana, p. 155.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

## ***Xantolo***



Figure 14. Joy & Aguilar, *Xantolo* (2009), Melbourne Recital Centre  
photo: Thea Baumann

*Xantolo* was another collaboration with a very different point of inspiration. I created the project in collaboration with Dr Evaristo Aguilar, Professor of Percussion at the Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas in Tampico, Mexico. Evaristo has developed a methodology of collaborating with international artists and composers which relies on a shared experience of the local Huastecan culture in North East Mexico. Previous collaborations have resulted in the creation of a number of new works including *Voces de la Hausteca* by Swedish percussionist/composer Anders Astrand inspired by the Huapango music of Aguilar's local area and *5 Fades* for solo percussion by Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser. After meeting while working on a sculptural percussion piece I made for Fritz Hauser's work *Schallmaschine 07* in Switzerland, Evaristo invited me to his home town Tampico to develop a new work inspired by a shared experience of the Day of the Dead celebrations in nearby villages.

The Day of the Dead celebrations are called *Xantolo* in the local dialect of the Huastecan area of eastern Mexico. Based on ancient pre-Columbian rituals, the traditions were absorbed by the colonising Catholic church and moved from August to November to align with existing Christian holy days All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Once a year, families visit the cemeteries to be with the souls of their departed ancestors. They prepare altars of food and drink in their homes to encourage the souls to return. The *Xantolo* celebrations differ from rituals in other parts of the country in that they celebrate the living as well as the dead.

Evaristo and I visited three villages over two days near Tampico to witness some extraordinary public and private rituals. First, we visited the village of Tancoco in the hills one evening to attend the home of hat maker Don Hipolito and his family. The night air was punctuated by the sounds of insects, music and dance. When we arrived, we were taken inside a small room for a cup of earthy milky hot chocolate and introductions. Outside in the courtyard, Don Hipolito, wearing a golden sombrero, played violin while his two young grandsons played guitar (the local huapango music always uses the instrumentation of two guitars and violin). Other members of his family danced in a circle, some wearing homemade masks, their footsteps kicking up the dust. On one side of the courtyard sat a massive pot of steaming tamales, meat-filled dough parcels wrapped in leaves. Don Hipolito then took us into a private room off the main bedroom to see their Day of the Dead altar. A large table was covered in flowers, incense, candles, food, beer, the traditional *Pan de Muerto* (Day of the Dead bread) and tamales wrapped in leaves. We were given food to eat from the altar. While the rest of the group conversed in Spanish, I assumed they were talking about lost loved ones or weighty matters and was surprised to find out later that they had talked mainly about mutual friends. On Evaristo's advice, I purchased two sombreros as a gesture of thanks to Don Hipolito and his family for their generosity in inviting me into their homes on such an extraordinary evening. After some time, Don Hipolito and his wife became a little distracted and clearly had other rituals to attend to. It became clear it was time to go. As we left, it started to rain. Don Hipolito said happily "that is the souls of the dead returning".



Figure 15. Sombrero maker Don Hipolito with his grandsons  
Village of Tancoco, near Tampico, Mexico, photo: author

After Tancoco, we drove to the village of Taminin for a meal of large tamales. After the meal, we went outside where a large crowd in costume had gathered in the village square for mass

dancing in a circle. The drone of a guitar flooded over a loud speaker. There was an atmosphere of jubilation and festivity with laughter and shouting. We walked away from the square and spent some time in a nearby church. We could hear the distant muffled sounds of fire crackers, shouts and the low hum of music. The church looked like a party had just finished with stray decorations and occasional parishioners wandering through. The following day, we visited the village of Tantayuca where a long happy procession of people in costume walked up the long street to the cemetery. The costumes included handmade traditional costumes featuring the archetypes of local mythology such as an old man and a pregnant young woman with a baby on a pitchfork. Other costumes revealed the influence of Halloween from America just over the border with store-bought costumes including Mutant Ninja Warriors and Egyptian warriors. In the cemetery, small groups gathered by gravesides where costumed dancers were paid to perform ancient ritual dances to music performed on violin and handheld drums.



Figure 16. Day of the Dead ritual dancers, Tantayuca cemetery, near Tampico, Mexico  
photo: Evaristo Aguilar

### **The Day of the Dead**

In the months after the visit to Mexico, I reflected on my response to those experiences and how to make art out of it. I read about the complex history of invasion and colonisation, the appropriation of ancient rituals by the Catholic church and the Mexican attitude to death. There is such a complex layering of history in the Day of the Dead rituals in Mexico from the pre-Columbian traditions, to the Christian modifications, to now an Americanisation as motifs and costumes from Halloween have begun infiltrating the traditional forms. In the private home in a remote village, the forms were traditional. In the public space of the cemetery of a larger village,

there was a mix of Halloween and traditional costumes, while the dances and other rituals still bore strong relationship to ancient forms.

There was a marked contrast to Western rituals around death. As Octavio Paz wrote “everything in the modern world functions as if death did not exist...The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it; it is one of his favourite toys and his most steadfast love.”<sup>168</sup> In the West, we talk of memories of the dead; in Mexico, they believe the dead actually return to visit and consume food. In Mexico, the Day of the Dead is a public festival for the community to come together to honour the dead every year. In the West, we have the public funeral and then private grief. There was a potent atmosphere of celebration and festivity in the large outdoor Xantolo events. In contrast, in the private home of Don Hipolito, the rituals seemed tinged with sadness despite the exuberance of the dancing and the music. I was most moved by the generous domestic setting - the harsh tragedy of loss seemed to have evolved into gentle ritual to remember. The sense of loss was there, but there was no wallowing in emotion, just a clear focus on necessary rituals. Evaristo and I were accepted into this arrangement naturally and hospitably, though at that moment when the rain came - the souls of the dead returning - it was clear the family was moving into a private realm and we had to go.



Figure 17. Day of the Dead parade leading to Tantayuca cemetery, near Tampico, Mexico  
photo: Evaristo Aguilar

I aimed to recreate the experience of being welcomed into Don Hipolito’s home, of sitting in front of his Day of the Dead altar while an unfathomable presence was anticipated. Building on my work with intimate performances, I determined there should be an audience of no more than 20

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<sup>168</sup> O. Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Grove Press Inc. New York, 1985.

people at a time. The low 2 x 2 metre stage would be surrounded by chairs on three sides. The stage would be covered with food, flowers, found objects, incense and candles to resemble a Day of the Dead altar. The altar would be both the setting and the instruments for Evaristo to play. In the performance, it is the audience who is visiting. Are they the dead visiting the altar, or is Evaristo the dead returning to consume at the altar? I made a series of percussive sculptures inspired by items seen during the trip with a pile of wooden tamales made from hollowed blocks of African rosewood. The “tamales” resembled woodblocks in sound with varying pitches. I made a circular wooden drum corresponding to both the hand drum played at the cemetery and the circular dances. The marks on the drum corresponded to marks made in the dirt by the dancers’ feet.



Figure 18. Joy & Aguilar, *Xantolo* (2009), Melbourne Recital Centre. Note circular wooden drum on percussionists lap and wooden ‘tamales’ in foreground. Photo: Thea Baumann

In contrast to *Yakumo Honjin*, where I outsourced the making of the sculptures, I made these myself as I wanted the same kind of rustic handmade quality of tamales that we had eaten. I wanted to see the imprint of my own hand and while making them, to come to terms with what I had experienced. In the workshop I was muffled, in a cocoon created by ear muffs, dust mask and face mask. The horrendous screech of the machinery and the dangerous tools seemed remote and so removed from the intent to create a subtle and intimate experience of sound. It reminded me of a line from a Kahil Gibran poem - the sweetest sound of the lute is created by

hacking with knives.<sup>169</sup> Gibran is talking of an emotional journey and perhaps in some way the noise and brutality involved in creating the sculptures corresponded to the scarifications of grief after a recent death. The sound made when the sculptures were played was, in contrast, delicate and rich, and in some way resonated with my experience of the transformative effect of the *Xantolo* rituals themselves.

### **Ritual and Reverence**

When Evaristo arrived in Melbourne in the lead up to the performance, he selected a series of bowls and glasses from my collection and some bells and chimes that he had brought with him to add to the altar. He had also brought with him two small traditional drums from the Oaxacan area which became the centre piece of the altar. The drums represented his grandparents who were from that region. We had some disagreements about the staging. Evaristo would have liked to perform once to 100 people rather than five times to 20 people. However, I felt strongly that the potency that I wanted to create was only possible with a small audience. Evaristo would have also liked me to make a series of miniature buildings like other works I have done. However, in my mind, the buildings were not the strongest images for me from our shared experience of the Day of the Dead celebrations – it was the open spaces – the village square, the cemetery, the courtyard; and most of all the altar simply laid out on a table that were most potent.

The “score” was no more than a list of my memories of sounds heard in the three villages Tancoco, Tamilin and Tantayuca over two days, for Evaristo to use or not as an inspiration. In one village, the sounds included:

- Silence punctuated by insects in the night mountain air
- Guitar, violin, rattles
- Dancers’ footsteps in the dust,
- The Day of the Dead altar at Don Hipolito’s house; incense burning
- Rain on the roof
- In Spanish “this is the souls of the dead returning”<sup>170</sup>

I gave Evaristo the list of sounds that I recalled but ultimately, his performance developed as a kind of shamanistic embodiment of his deep connection with the area and his memories of his deceased grandparents. A reviewer described *Xantolo* as

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<sup>169</sup> K. Gibran, *The Prophet*, William Heinemann Ltd, Mayfair, London, 1972, p. 36. The line in the poem reads: “And is not the lute that soothes your spirit the very wood that was hollowed with knives?”

<sup>170</sup> For a full list of sounds from the score see Appendix 5.

...a structured improvisation, the work is part percussion performance and part theatrical presentation, an abstraction of certain characteristics of Huastecan Xantolo celebrations, though perhaps more muted and internal.<sup>171</sup>

The *mise-en-scène* was more than the percussive sculptures and found objects including crockery, metal bowls, crystal platters, flowers and bread created a tableau within which the work was performed. Where the percussive sculptures for *Yakumo Honjin* corresponded to an imagined narrative about travelling Samurai, for *Xantolo*, the performed sculptures and found objects were deeply connected to the actual experience of the Day of the Dead celebrations and musician Evaristo Aguilar's deeply personal relationship with the rituals. The performances took place on the day when the Day of the Dead is celebrated and it was very painful for Evaristo to be away from his family. The two drums which represented his deceased grandparents became the means to summon and commune directly with them through the performance.

In *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead*, Stanley Brandes writes that for the faithful,

...the Day of the Dead is first and foremost a sacred occasion, directed towards recognizing, honouring, and even nourishing deceased ancestors through creating conditions which promote a kind of spiritual communion with them. It is a mortuary ritual, which aims to satisfy both the alimentary and emotional needs of departed souls.<sup>172</sup>

Being separated from his family on the day when they would be honouring ancestors during Day of the Dead celebrations back in Mexico, compelled Evaristo to invest deeply in the performance of *Xantolo* as he sought to honour and invoke the souls of his grandparents. The work became not necessarily a religious or esoteric ritual, but definitely a ritual connected to a bigger story that goes beyond a conventional notion of experimental music.

Anthropologist Victor Turner was one of the earliest to connect the study of ritual with performance in the 1960's. Turner defined ritual as "prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in invisible beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects."<sup>173</sup> He argued that ritual in its "performative plenitude" found in tribal and post tribal cultures was the antecedent to more recent cultural genres including those, which are generally considered "aesthetic".<sup>174</sup> The relationship between ritual and performance was explored in detail over the long career of Richard Schechner who closely referenced Turner's work. In his key text *Between Theater and Anthropology*, Schechner

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<sup>171</sup> C. Reid 'Music for the Quick and the Dead', RealTime issue #94 Dec-Jan 2009 p. 46.

<sup>172</sup> S. Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p.79.

<sup>174</sup> Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York, PAJ Publications, 1982, p.81.

writes that performances in which the performers are *transformed* in some way are usually designated as rituals. However, those in which the performer is *transported* are usually called theatre. He defines transportation as occurring when the performer is taken somewhere” but by the end of the performance, they are settled back into themselves and “re-enter ordinary life”.<sup>175</sup> In this appellation, *Xantolo* would be described as an example of transportation in that Evaristo appeared to be in a trance but gradually, by the end of the evening was taken back to his usual self. Schechner writes that “people are accustomed to calling transportation performances ‘theatre’ and transformation performances ‘ritual’. But this neat separation doesn't hold up. Mostly the two kinds of performances coexist in the same event.”<sup>176</sup> This can be seen particularly in an event like *Xantolo*, which blurred the boundaries between music, theatre and ritual to create a moving and involving tableau. Schechner writes of the development of “in-between” performative genres and the way that “In-between [was] becoming the norm: between literature and recitation; between religion and entertainment; between ritual and theatre.”<sup>177</sup> This “in-betweenness” can be seen in the incorporation of modern and traditional forms in both ritual and performance. Schechner describes at length the use of both modern and traditional objects used in the Yaqui deer dances in Arizona which resonates with the assemblage of traditional drums, found and made objects used in *Xantolo*:

The transformations of being that compose performance reality evidence themselves in all kinds of anachronisms and strange, incongruous combinations that reflect the liminal qualities of performance. That the deer singer's water drum sits in a modern metal cooking pot, straight from the kitchen...is not only a question of modernisation, of making do...but an example of transformative doubling. The kitchen pot is analogous to the dancer and the singers: the pot does not stop being itself even as it serves to evoke the flower world of the deer songs. Both pot and performers are "not themselves" and "not not themselves". Pot and performers link two realms of experience, the only two realms performance ever deals with: the world of contingent existence as ordinary objects and persons and the world of transcendent existence as magical implements, gods, demons, characters.<sup>178</sup>

The tableau in *Xantolo* was a rich feast of flowers, food, candles, instruments, gleaming metal and glass vessels. Presented as though on a Day of the Dead altar, the effect was to imbue the objects with otherworldly properties as they were manipulated in performance. Only a small

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<sup>175</sup> R. Schechner and V. Turner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p.126-7. “We might even say that there are two kinds of transportation, the voluntary and the involuntary and that character acting belongs to the first category and trance to the second.”

<sup>176</sup> R. Schechner, p. 130.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 322.

<sup>178</sup> R. Schechner, p. 6.

selection of objects were used but the performance created a sense that all were significant and all could be activated to make sound if needed, even the fragile marigolds.

In *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Christopher Small defines ritual as “a form of organised behaviour in which humans use the language of gesture, or paralanguage, to affirm, to explore and to celebrate their ideas of how the relationships of the cosmos (or of a part of it), operate, and thus of how they themselves should relate to it and to one another.”<sup>179</sup> He writes that “ritual is the mother of all the arts...[it] does not just *use* the arts but itself *is* the great unitary performance art in which all of what we today call the arts – and some of the sciences as well – have their origin.”<sup>180</sup> *Xantolo* sits somewhere between the distinctions Ronald Grimes makes in *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, between a “performative approach to ritual” and “a ritual approach to [performance]”.<sup>181</sup> The work is both a ritual and a performance. In summoning up his ancestors, Evaristo sincerely enacted an ancient ritual. And yet, he did so within a performance on a small stage at the Melbourne Recital Centre in front of a fee-paying audience.

A crucial part of my practice has been working on how to develop the right frame of mind in the musician so that they perform in a way that will have impact on the audience. For *Xantolo*, the audience was seated so close to the musician that every small gesture and facial expression that the musician made was clearly visible. The sounds that Evaristo made had more power because the audience was so engaged by the quality of his deep connection with the material. *Xantolo* illustrated that when the musician is deeply engaged, the quality of their own listening while playing has an impact on the audience’s engagement with the work.<sup>182</sup> Part of my development in working on this series of projects has been discovering the words or images that will activate the quality of listening and approach by the musicians that I am striving for. This will be discussed in more detail in relation to *System Building* in the next chapter.

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<sup>179</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Wesleyan University Press, 1998, p. 95.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid p.105-6

<sup>181</sup> Ronald Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, USA, OUP, 2014, p.225.

<sup>182</sup> See Appendices 9 and 10 for reviews that give a personal response to the work.

### Chapter 3 – System Building



Figure 19. Rosemary Joy *System Building* (2007), Melbourne Recital Centre  
Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page

*System Building* is a sculptural percussion work inspired by the buildings in which it was performed. Developed as a tourable work that was also site-specific, *System Building* emerged out of interest in sculptural percussion expressed by international and local presenters following a performance of *Underground* at the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) in Adelaide, 2008. The work was commissioned by and toured to five venues in Europe, Australia and China: Watertoren West (Groningen, the Netherlands), Radialsystem V (Berlin), CarriageWorks (Sydney), Melbourne Recital Centre and Red Gate Gallery (Beijing). Five percussive sculptures were created for the work, each one inspired by the architecture of one of these buildings, which included a custom built concert hall, a former sewerage pumping station, a still functioning water tower, a former railway workshop and a Ming Dynasty fort. For the first tour of the work in 2009 to Europe, Sydney and Melbourne, *System Building* was made up of the four percussive sculptures inspired by the four buildings on that tour. For the tour to Beijing in 2010, an additional instrument inspired by Red Gate Gallery was added and a new score devised to incorporate the new sculpture. The work was primarily made of African Rosewood with found and constructed

metal objects including small Chinese gongs, antique wrenches and bolts and a laser cut rectangle references the architectural shapes on the exterior of the Melbourne Recital Centre.

*System Building* was a development from an earlier sculptural percussion work *Underground*, performed in Australia, Mexico, Japan, the Netherlands and Belgium (2007-2011). *Underground* was developed as part of a regional arts project at a disused clay mine in Western Victoria. While earlier sculptural percussion projects were created specifically for the percussionist who would play it, *Underground* was created with the intention of touring the work with multiple performances by a number of different percussionists. The work consisted of four sculptures loosely inspired by the operations, tools and mythology of mining. The sculptures were completed only days before the first rehearsal. Composer David Young developed a canon, a guided improvisation in four parts that was performed by two percussionists for performances in Australia and by four percussionists from Slagwerkgroep den Haag for performances in the Netherlands and Belgium.



Figure 20. Joy & Young *Underground* (2007), Slagwerkgroep den Haag, Filmhuis den Haag, Netherlands  
photo: David Young

Watching the musicians engage with the *Underground* percussive sculptures was a key inspiration for *System Building*. The instructions provided by David Young gave the musicians freedom to make choices in each section. The premiere performance by Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott were revelatory in the depth of experimentation and exploration. During rehearsals of *Underground* with the Slagwerkgroep den Haag in the Netherlands, one musician seemed initially to not know how to engage with the work. At first he seemed almost bored that he was being asked to play with these bits of wood. But as the rehearsals progressed, something extraordinary happened. The rigour and quality of his training and professional experience as a percussionist were channelled into a few small, and at times terrifying gestures. With only four audience members sitting opposite him, this huge man would make a remarkable gesture of power and scratch all his fingernails slowly across the top of the box. Then he would start finding subtle variations in sound while playing the woodblocks with chopsticks; it became almost like a technical exercise, a research project. It was as though he was finding different things that kept the work alive for him. Watching him perform made me realise that it was possible to give a level of freedom to all the musicians, even those who were more comfortable with conventional notation. Percussionist Diego Espinosa's astonishingly inventive approach to the sculptures sowed the seeds for *System Building*. The key revelation was the moment in one performance of *Underground* when he flipped one of the sculptures, a miniature wooden mountain, on its end so that it became a walking puppet with knitting needle legs. Diego's ability to dismantle the sculptures and spontaneously create new forms became the basis of the reconstructive element of *System Building*. David Young's structure for the piece as a canon was another important inspiration for the *System Building* score in which the musicians moved between pairs of sculptures.



Figure 21. Joy & Young *Underground* (2007), percussive sculpture 'mountain' by Rosemary Joy  
photo: Yatzek

Another key work that informed the development of *System Building* was *Schallmaschine 06*, a collaboration between Aphids, Speak Percussion and Swiss architect Boa Baumann and Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser. For that work, I designed three percussive sculptures inspired by hidden chambers underneath Federation Square and by consultations with the percussionists in which they revealed their favourite sounds. Audiences were taken on a journey from the Federation Square Atrium into spaces hidden underneath the square in groups of three at a time for a solo concert. Each group of three people saw a performance on only one instrument in one space. At the end of the concert, which lasted only 12 minutes, the audience was led through an underground passageway to emerge blinking in the sunlight at the far end of Federation Square. Through working on this project, I learned of the value of giving the audience a journey to prime them to be receptive to the performance.

### **A private critique**

*System Building* is part of a meta-structure. The work maps out in miniature the international tour the project has taken: the percussionists move from sculpture to sculpture just as the work as a whole moved from venue to venue during the tour. Rather than creating a work that had a performative life detached from its surroundings, *System Building* was customised for particular musicians, at a particular place and a particular time. Developed as a result of a presentation at a performing arts market, the work was a playful commentary about the, at times, mercenary side of the business where artists sidle up to presenters hoping to snare interest in buying work and presenters look for product to fill their venues. Customising the instruments not only for the venue but also for the particular percussionists who will perform was conceived as a private antidote to this age of globalised art fodder disconnected from its surroundings. In *Noise*, Jacques Attali writes:

Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualise a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialise its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalise its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning.<sup>183</sup>

In *System Building*, I sought to work against the commodification of art by introducing an element of ritual, by personalising the connection between the musicians and audience and between the work and the buildings in which it was performed. By making connections between countries, people and sites purely on the basis of the somewhat random collection of venues interested in presenting the work, I added a hidden meaning to the work that was not intended to be apparent

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<sup>183</sup> J. Attali, *Noise*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, Press, 1985 p. 5.

to others. Blending knowledge of the performers' characteristics with personal perceptions of the venues became an act of defiance against the performing arts market modus operandi of selling arts product to be anonymously consumed.

The administration of this project - grappling with venues, each with their own demands and agendas, was part of the artistic process. Since the work was inspired by the venues in which it was performed, if any venue pulled out or was added, the work itself changed. Initially, the Singapore National Museum, a vast colonial building with a glass and steel extension, was to have been part of the project. Including a percussive sculpture inspired by that building would have radically changed the work. The work and the tour were simultaneously built up from the processes of arts administration with emails and phone calls finally securing the venues that would both inspire and accommodate the work: as each venue was confirmed, a new miniature building was added to the project. This process of developing the tour is reflected in the final work - a series of pieces that fit together to create a series of possibilities. At the start of the performance, the miniature buildings sit in a row in the order that the tour progressed from the Netherlands to China. Like Christmas cakes waiting to be pulled apart, they are then reassembled to create suddenly a quite conventional percussion set up before being reassembled again to create a new operating system. The work moves slowly round the world colonising/appropriating arts venues. In making a small protest against the power that arts venues have to control what is seen, *System Building* pulls the buildings apart before reassembling them into a new form. The buildings are destroyed then rebuilt. The venues and festivals that are interested in the work become connected with each other through the administration and realisation of the project, which creates a pseudo-network of the venues in which it is performed, a network that is only activated by the project.

### **Architectural engagement**

To prepare the audience to engage with the work, they were taken on a journey through each venue. In the Netherlands, audiences climbed staircases and ladders for 15 minutes to reach the upper chamber in the Groningen water tower. The tower was used as a look out during World War 2 and was a familiar landmark that none of the audience had previously entered as it still controlled the town's water flow. By the time the audience reached the summit, they were excited. When their heads popped through the trap door on the top level of the water tower, their faces showed expressions of delight and expectation. The journey prepared them to engage with the work and gave them a very different perspective on the miniature water tower instrument that they were seeing performed in front of them. The window shutters were kept closed during the performance and opened at the end to the delight of the audience who were then able to view their town from a height not usually possible in the very flat Dutch landscape of Groningen. The

parallels between the miniature buildings seen in the distance through the window and the miniature (sculptural) buildings on the table were evident and added to the audience's experience of the distortions of scale in being inside the building that was also being performed.

In Berlin, audiences gathered in the foyer of Radialsystem V before being led as a group outside, across the walkway overlooking the Spree to a building many would not have noticed previously. The small three-storey structure housed flats for visiting artists. Travelling up three flights of stairs, the audience arrived in a small attic with low beams and the dusty atmosphere of a room that seemed untouched for the previous fifty years. Audiences arrived chortling, happy at their adventure to take their places seated at a table behind which stood the two percussionists. Part of the brief for the percussionists was to smile in welcome to audiences as they arrived, heightening the experience of being an invited guest to a special event. The experience of walking as a group gave the audience the feeling of being on an unexpected trip together, bonding them and increasing their sense of expectation about what they would encounter next.

At the Melbourne Recital Centre and Carriageworks, the work was presented in rooms that would be familiar to many in the audience: the Salon at the MRC and Bay 20 at Carriageworks. However, the journey to reach the space was unexpected. At the Recital Centre, audiences were led upstairs as a group and then backstage along hidden passageways, quite different from the red plushness of the foyer. Travelling back down a service staircase, the audience then entered the Melbourne Recital Centre Salon via the route normally taken by musicians. They entered the space to see only a small set up of a long table and twelve chairs. At Carriageworks, audiences were lead on a journey backstage past the dressing rooms and massive storage areas behind Bay 20 to finally enter the space and see a similarly small set up. In a massive space that usually held large seating banks, there were only 12 chairs and two tables with lighting emphasising the architectural features of the wall behind the musicians.

At times, the audiences were given a new perspective on a familiar venue. But whether the building was familiar or not, the journey to the performance space refreshed audiences and encourage their receptivity to the work. Rather than only starting to engage with the work once seated in a dark auditorium, the audience began their engagement with their sense of growing anticipation as they walked as a group towards the performance space within the venue.<sup>184</sup> In 'Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening', George Home-Cook writes that

Not only does the phenomenal multiplicity of contemporary theatre allow and demand the spectator to make ever greater and more complex attentional manoeuvres but it

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<sup>184</sup> For the examination presentation for this PhD, the audience was led out of the foyer onto the street and then down an alleyway to enter the theatre via the green room. *System Building* was presented as it was performed at Red Gate Gallery in China. Due to time and budget constraints, a new sculpture featuring the venue of the examination was not included.

increasingly makes us aware of our own embodied position and experience within this phenomenal matrix.<sup>185</sup>



Figure 22. Rosemary Joy, *System Building* (2009), Melbourne Recital Centre  
Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti (percussion), photo: Colin Page

In *System Building*, the act of walking engaged the audiences' bodies in the work and bonded them as a group, helping to increase their receptivity and capacity to listen to and engage with the work they were about to experience. In this way, the work could be seen as an example of what Home-Cook describes as "the intricate connections between the senses and the role of the body in the perceptual event."<sup>186</sup> This connection between the bodies of the musicians and audience and the role this plays in the experience of the work is expanded on by Ulanda Blair in an article about *System Building*:

The performances are at once intensely private and powerfully collective experiences, with the close proximity of bodies essential to the creation of the heightened physical and aural space...by slowing down the body, and by creating an ephemeral and intimate space for the contemplation of subtle visual and aural stimuli,

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<sup>185</sup> G. Home-Cook, 'Aural Acts: Theatre and the Phenomenology of Listening' in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* by Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (eds), UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 108.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Joy gives sense to the ways music, sculpture and architecture can all mutate and challenge each other.<sup>187</sup>

The project was a playful engagement with the notion of site specificity with the miniature sculptures of the venues highlighting the audience's awareness of the buildings in which they were seated. By definition, site-specific works are usually only presented in one place. In *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon writes of the way that the earliest site-specific art established "an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site."<sup>188</sup> By their nature, site-specific works are not tourable unless they are completely remade for a new venue to make them specific to the new site. *System Building*, on the other hand, is designed as a site-specific tourable work. The performance was the same at each of the first four venues of the tour. When the work later toured to Red Gate Gallery in Beijing, a new building was added to the performance, which changed to incorporate it. Built into the performance is the touring history of the work and particulars of the sites in which it has been performed. In performance, the sculptural forms become architectural experiments as they are built up, disassembled and reconfigured to make new structures. As Anna Tweedale writes in *Sonorities of Site: Aphids, Architecture and New Music 1998-2010*, my work in sculptural percussion "compares with the slow and incremental variations in building typologies that result from consistent architectural investigation."<sup>189</sup> The work explores architecture and site while playfully dismantling the building blocks that comprise it.

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<sup>187</sup> U. Blair, 'Site and Sound: Rosemary Joy's *System Building*' in *Magazine*, Volume 3.2, Melbourne, p. 39.

<sup>188</sup> M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

## Scale, proximity and focussed listening

...the miniscule, a narrow gate, opens up an entire world.<sup>190</sup>

In this work, there is a miniaturisation of sculptures, of audience (12 people at a time) and of duration (up to 12 minutes). The percussive sculpture is a tool to create intimacy and connection between audience and performer. Miniaturisation of all three elements heightens the experience of subtle sound and gesture. The musician's body becomes the background for a small theatre that is played out by his/her hands on the sculpture. The percussive sculptures are usually of "a domestic eminently portable scale" emphasising the personal connection the musician has with them.<sup>191</sup>

*System Building* alludes to a rich tradition of miniaturisation in those articles of childhood, the dollhouse and building blocks. An entire city can be constructed from building blocks and demolished in an hour. Dollhouses, with their secret interiors and hidden lives, suggest a more permanent domesticity. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart discusses the history of the miniature across terrains such as miniature books and model railways. She concludes that the miniature is "linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, [presenting] a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience."<sup>192</sup> In *System Building*, there are no dolls, only hands, which actively play with and then dismantle the buildings. The musicians are like giants in Gulliver's Travels exercising their power over a miniature cityscape. In the work, there is a deliberate hint of playfulness counterbalanced with reverence throughout the piece. However, the control that Bachelard alludes to when he writes "the cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it", is not far below the surface.<sup>193</sup>

The short duration of the performance is an important aspect of sculptural percussion. Susan Stewart writes about research conducted by the Department of Architecture at the University of Tennessee in which participants manipulated scale models of domestic environments. The experiments revealed that the participants' perception of time was altered by the same ratio as the model they manipulated. "In other words, thirty minutes would be experienced in five minutes at 1/12 scale and in 2.5 minutes at 1/24 scale".<sup>194</sup> At twelve minutes performance length, *System Building* is very short as an evening's entertainment. Even with the journey to the performance space, the event is usually no longer than 20-25 minutes. However, just as the research above

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<sup>190</sup> Bachelard, p.155.

<sup>191</sup> C. Troupe (ed.), *Sonorities of Site* (from interview with Rosemary Joy 30/10/2011).

<sup>192</sup> Stewart, p. 69.

<sup>193</sup> The rest of the quote reads "But in doing this, it must be understood that values become condensed and enriched in miniature...one must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small," an idea I will return to later in this chapter. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* p. 150

<sup>194</sup> Stewart, p. 66

suggests, there is something about the close attention required, the intimacy of the performance and the miniaturisation of the objects that alters the audiences' perception of time. This research confirms anecdotal feedback from audiences that the sculptural percussion performance has intensity to it such that it feels like a full and complete experience rather than a brief twelve-minute moment of performance.

A key aspect of this miniaturisation is that the audience is in close proximity to the performer. The proximity gives the audience members a privileged and in some cases unique experience. The small audience increases the connection between musician and audience, moving the work into the sphere of *relational art* where there is an emphasis on "the realm of human interactions and its social context".<sup>195</sup> LaBelle writes of the "relational lessons" that sound teaches us: "to produce and receive sound is to be involved in connections that make privacy intensely public, and public experience intensely personal."<sup>196</sup> The proximity of the musicians to audience increases the impact of the experience. Edward T. Hall's 1966 text *The Hidden Dimension* is still the benchmark for discussion about *proxemics*. He identified four proxemics zones of human interaction: an intimate zone (in which people are closer than 18 inches to each other), a personal zone (from approximately 18 inches to 4 feet), the social zone (from approximately 4 to 12 feet) and a public zone (more than 12 feet distance).<sup>197</sup> In general, concert performances set the audience and musicians at distance in the public zone. There is a significant amount of space between both groups. Live Art, at the other extreme, can be confronting when it pushes the audience member into intimate proximity or engagement with the performer. For example Australian artist Sarah Jane Norman's work often puts the audience/participant at very close quarters to the artist who may be bound or naked.<sup>198</sup> Many of the sculptural percussion works under discussion in this exegesis such as *System Building*, operate somewhere on the cusp of the personal and social zones. There is a close proximity between audience and musician which is not so close that it is threatening, but close enough so that both sides feel connected to each other and aware of nuance of gesture and interaction as though they are in conversation. For example, during a performance of *System Building* in Sydney, Diego Espinosa noticed that one audience member was distracted and not paying attention. He heightened the focus of his performance towards that person until they were drawn back into the work. Each audience member is valuable and noticed by the musician who can adjust their performance according to

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<sup>195</sup> Bourriaud, p. 14.

<sup>196</sup> B. LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006, p. ix.

<sup>197</sup> E.T. Hall, *Hidden Dimensions*, New York, Anchor Books, 1982, p. 117-125.

<sup>198</sup> *Songs of Rapture and Torture*, a work by Sarah Jane Norman was performed at the same Live Art festival as sculptural percussion work *Underground* at Sydney's Performance Space in 2008. The work featured the artist naked bound by rope with her eyes covered wearing only a showgirl's headdress. One at a time, audience members were invited into a small room to sit directly in front of her with legs touching while she sang Brecht.

the response they receive. If the audience is leaning in, attentive to every subtle sound, the musicians might push the subtlety further.

In an article about the connection between proxemics and music-making, Simon Waters writes of the tactility of sound, which is essentially “touching at a distance”.<sup>199</sup> This tactile dimension is exaggerated in a work like *System Building* in which the sound making involves the musicians touching the objects in a variety of ways (blowing, scratching, hitting, stroking) at such close quarters to the audience. Many performances would end with the audience chatting with the musicians while leaning forward to touch the objects and make their own sounds from them. The objects serve as a point of connection between musician and audience. Linda Sproul writing about an earlier sculptural percussion work *Underground* that “in performance the objects bring together the bodies of the percussionist and listener in a tight focus that falls inwards into the personal space between them.”<sup>200</sup> However, while my work in sculptural percussion creates an intimate setting of audience and musician in close proximity, I am not interested in exploring intimacy itself. As Markus Heinzelmann observes in the catalogue essay for exhibition *Personal Affairs: New Forms of Intimacy*, “as soon as artists start to address intimacy, the intimate becomes public. Presenting intimacy in public means the opposite of keeping quiet.”<sup>201</sup> The intimacy of the staging and connection between musician and audience are explored as a means to an enhanced experience of sound and sculpture. Intimacy itself is not the focus of the work.

There are some notable examples of musical works performed for small audiences from 1940-1980 created by or inspired by John Cage, including Cage's *Living Room Music* (1940), originally written to be performed in a living room, Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), described as “a seminal moment in this history of the avant-garde” and which divided the audience between three rooms for simultaneous performances<sup>202</sup> and in the 1970s, John Zorn's miniature percussion concerts held at his kitchen table in New York.<sup>203</sup> In more recent years with the development of Live Art, one-on-one and micro-performance, there have been numerous examples of projects designed for strictly limited audience capacity. In Australia, Roberta Bosetti and Renato Cuocolo have created high profile works exploring intimacy and voyeurism in a series of works for tiny audiences since the early 2000's.<sup>204</sup> Australian dance works for small audiences include Phillip Adams' *Nativity* staged in a custom-built miniature suburban house set in a theatre for an audience of twenty-five people at a time. *Terrain* by New Zealanders Guy

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<sup>199</sup> S. Waters, ‘Touching at a Distance: Resistance, Tactility, Proxemics and the Development of a Hybrid Virtual/Physical Performance System’, *Contemporary Music Review*, 2013, Vol. 32, Nos. 2-3, p. 121.

<sup>200</sup> L. Sproul in association with J. Duffy, *Small Quiet Gestures* exhibition catalogue essay, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, 1 June – 1 July 2007.

<sup>201</sup> M. Heinzelmann, *Personal Affairs: New Forms of Intimacy*, exhibition catalogue, Museum Morsbroich Leverkusen, Dec 3, 06-Feb 18, 07, pub by Dumont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Köln, 2006.

<sup>202</sup> J. Kelley, *Childsplay: the Art of Allan Kaprow*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, p. 29.

<sup>203</sup> Mentioned by Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser in conversation, 12/7/08, Melbourne.

<sup>204</sup> IRAA Theatre website <http://www.iraatheatre.com.au/index.html> accessed 6/5/2012

Ryan and Malia Johnston, described in the performance notes as "an exploration of humanity, scale and landscape", incorporated matchbox cars, miniature trees and two performers in close proximity to an audience of thirty-two. Simon Ellis' *Inert* is a work for two performers and two audience members who experience the work while strapped to tables that move from vertical to horizontal. *Private Dances* curated by choreographer Natalie Cursio is a series of works that change for each presentation, staged in a tent with one performer and one audience member. Most works created for small audiences, particularly one-on-one performance has been associated with the field of Live Art. A powerful influence has been the Battersea One-On-One Festival founded in 2010. Australian producers inspired by that precedent include Melbourne's Theatreworks which presented a one-on-one festival as part of the 2014 Festival of Live Art and Western Australia's Proximity Festival, founded in 2011 as a "one-on-one intimate performance platform".<sup>205</sup> There has been some reaction against curating work on the basis of format rather than content, but still the trend continues.<sup>206</sup>

The trend towards intimate performance can be seen as a reflection of a broader trend in modern society. In writing about intimacy and theatre, Bruce Barton writes of "a twentieth-century cultural shift that emphasizes intimate interactions over intimate relationships...reflected both in sociological perspectives which focus on a persistent increase in trends toward individualism."<sup>207</sup> The hunger for intimacy is met through orchestrated arts events rather than the ebb and flow of informal connection between people. Interestingly, there are very few percussion works for small audiences: at least two examples in Australia were directly inspired by sculptural percussion. In 2012, Matthias Schack-Arnott, one of the original performers of sculptural percussion project *Underground* (2007) and a performer of *System Building* in 2010, created *Chrysalis* (2012), a percussion work for one audience member at a time seated underneath a wooden 'tent' upon which the percussive work was performed.<sup>208</sup> Aphids administrative assistant, percussionist Anna van Veldhuisen was mentored by Aphids to create *House Proud* in 2011, a work for fifteen audience members at a time "focusing on the unnoticed, beautiful and minute sounds we make in our repetitive daily gestures."<sup>209</sup> In researching this exegesis, I came across a work called *Music for Small Audience* by German percussionist Alexandre Babel; it transpired that the work was so named as an ironic commentary on its premiere performance as part of a university exam for a small audience of examiners.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Proximity Festival website <http://proximityfestival.com/about/> accessed 17/3/2015

<sup>206</sup> M. Chatzichristodoulou & R. Zerihan (eds.), 'Intimacy in Performance: A Discussion' *Intimacy Across Visceral and Digital Performance*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 224.

<sup>207</sup> B. Barton, 'Paradox as Process: Intermedial Anxiety and the Betrayals of Intimacy', *Theatre Journal* Volume 61, Number 4, December 2009, p. 578.

<sup>208</sup> M. Schack-Arnott, *Chrysalis*, 2012, <http://matthiasschackarnott.com/projects/chrysalis/>

<sup>209</sup> A. Van Veldhuisen, *House Proud*, 2011, <http://annalouise.net/pastprojects/houseproud>.

<sup>210</sup> Email to Rosemary Joy from Alexandre Babel, 2/4/2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYOa66KmR6E>

Most of my sculptural percussion projects only succeed with a small audience. With a large audience, the event becomes less about the object and more about the sound. It becomes less about the relationship between the musician and audience and more about a conventional delivery of an arts experience. It is through the immediate connection between musician/audience and instrument/audience created by the proximity, that a more focussed listening experience is possible. If there is no one else seated between musician and audience member, the latter feels special, honoured and important. That frame of mind brings to the audience member an openness to the experience. We are used to being in a mass, anonymous. Being noticed, known and cherished is an important part of feeling connected in this work. When there are only 12 people in the audience, if one member is missing, their loss is felt. Martin Ball wrote in a review of *Schallmaschine 06* that it “forces a reflection on the notion of audience as collective experience, a direct challenge to the simulacrum aesthetic of mass media entertainment”<sup>211</sup> The same can be said of all the sculptural percussion works performed for small audiences. The intimacy and sense of connection between audience and musician bestows a feeling that the audience is receiving a blessing from the musician. At times, during the performance, the musician may be performing directly in front of an audience member. It is as though it is their own private performance and the other audience members are voyeurs, waiting for their turn at a private performance. LaBelle writes of “the intensity and grace with which sound may create a relational space”.<sup>212</sup> In *System Building*, the proximity of audience and musician creates a relational space in which the sound can have an impact while also making particular demands on the audience. As Tweedale writes about *System Building*, “the intimate and sometimes intensely quiet performances...required subtle and at times more obvious effort from the audience.”<sup>213</sup> The immediacy of the audience’s reaction is heightened with a small audience. The proximity is intended to both increase the audience's perception of sound, and to create a context in which there is a more human exchange - quite distinct from an anonymous experience in a concert hall. The musician can see, connect with and personalise the performance for the audience in a way that increases their capacity to listen to and engage with the work.

## The Score

The performance of *System Building* is a blend of choreography and sound making. The sound sits within the choreography, the gesture emphasising or amplifying sound. The choreography was created through a focus on the way that the two musicians worked together and the quality of movement made by the musicians as they crossed each other in performance creating

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<sup>211</sup> M. Ball ‘Deep Rumbings Below the Surface’, *The Age*, 24 October 2006.  
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/arts-reviews/schallmaschine-06/2006/10/24/1161455696238.html>

<sup>212</sup> LaBelle, B., *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, New York, The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010 p. xvi.

<sup>213</sup> Troup, 2012, p. 30.

moments of connection between them as they played. The work required a dedication from the musician, a way of approaching the sound-making process with an awareness of their movements and its impact on the audience. The first sections of *System Building* explore the edge of noise, which Douglas Kahn in *Noise, Water, Meat* describes as “latent in percussion”.<sup>214</sup> The pieces are scraped, knocked, tapped with a series of incidental sounds as they are moved and placed in new positions on the table. The shapes are then arranged into type – metal pieces in one section, wooden boxes in another as a small percussive joke referencing the more usual instrumental set ups of contemporary percussion. Finally, the musicians pull out mallets and it is only then that there are more obviously percussive passages. After two minutes of rapid percussive exchange, one musician begins building a new structure from the pieces while the other continues playing on the decreasing number of available objects. The performance notes that I gave the musicians included not only references to the sound, but also the movements that made the sound and the attitude that generated the movement, for example, “find one moment of drama or point of connection with the other musician in gesture and or sound” and “use a mixture of slow and rapid gestures when laying out pieces maintaining an awareness of sound.”<sup>215</sup> In his videos for the OJAI Music Festival online university series, Steven Schick speaks of the way that “percussion is simultaneously the art of noises and the art of the body.”<sup>216</sup> The musician needs an awareness of the delicate connection between the gesture and sound created. As the work progresses, the internal logic in the arrangement of objects is revealed, causing incidental sounds and a flow of movement between all the pieces.

The score could not be devised until the tour schedule and venues were confirmed, as the tour schedule dictated the order in which the sculpture of each venue was played. Initially, I struggled with the best format for the score. I wanted to give the musicians a structure within which there was room for experimentation and improvisation. A graphic score seemed too open and a conventionally notated score seemed too closed. Ultimately, I gave the musicians a list of tasks and refined the work during rehearsal and performance often giving directions about motivation, much as a theatre director might. There were 16 performances in the Netherlands and 25 performances in Berlin with each performance lasting 12 minutes, providing an opportunity to refine the work and experiment with modifying the instructions given to the musicians to see what worked. During the rehearsal period, I guided the musicians through their interpretation of the tasks listed in the score and their approach to the sculptures, giving feedback at specific junctures concentrating on the visual and aural simultaneously. A key concern to me was to

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<sup>214</sup> D. Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, 158.

<sup>215</sup> The *System Building* scores and some performance notes are included in Appendices 2-4.

<sup>216</sup> Steven Schick, OJAI Music Festival, Online University, 'Understanding Music as a Physical Act' <http://www.ojaiu.org/2015/03/2015-class-2-the-physicality-of-sound/>

maintain the immediacy and vibrancy of the musician's engagement with the objects, while also containing the work so that it did not derail into object theatre and comedy.

The instructions, which formed the basis of the work, were then tweaked and refined before and in between performances in the Netherlands and Berlin. Notes to the musicians during rehearsals and between performances formed the basis for the next stage of development of the score used. In *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Michael Nyman writes that in this kind of score, the composer

...is not concerned with prescribing a defined time-object whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but [is] more excited by the prospect of outlining a situation in which sounds may occur, a process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional rules.<sup>217</sup>

In *System Building*, the compositional rules delineate a situation within which the musicians have freedom to be inventive and playful both in the sounds they make and the structures they build. These rules give the musicians a series of tasks and often a word or poetic image to keep in mind while playing. During the rehearsals preparing for the tour to China, it became apparent that one section was not working. When the musicians laid the pieces flat, they would drop out of performance mode as though suddenly they were roadies setting up a show. There was a shift in their bodies and awareness. My initial instruction had been that they should think of themselves as chefs/workmen in that section: practical, task oriented, reaching in front of each other, moving around each other as needed. The focus was on the sound but also on the structure unfolding in front of them. But somehow that meant any poetry was lost. The key word that was needed to inform their approach to the work was *reverence*. While the work was playful, an attitude of reverence had to be held throughout. The musicians needed to maintain the attitude and focus of the musician's body and ears even when doing something as apparently mundane as laying out objects. Once this shift took place, the work began to come together. In the dress rehearsal for my PhD presentation, the musicians were almost too serious and I gave them a note to not be afraid to be playful. The combination of both playfulness and reverence formed the musicians' motivation throughout the work.

The elements of *System Building* including the journey to the space, the proximity of the audience to musicians, the relationship between the sculpture and architecture and the scale of the sculptures combine to create an experience in which every subtle sound and gesture made by the musicians is taken in by the audience. The audience has a focussed listening experience

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<sup>217</sup> Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999, p. 27.

that arises from a feeling of connection to the musicians as they play. By observing and hearing the work as it unfolds on the table in front of them, I hope that the audience will leave the performance space with their ears more open to the sounds that they make as they interact with the world.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Appendix 12 is a review of *System Building* by Geoffrey Gartner that includes a personal response to the work revealing that my intentions were at least in part realised on a small selection of audience members.

## Chapter 4 – The Appearance of Sound



Figure 23. Rosemary Joy, *The Appearance of Sound* (2011), Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, 2011, photo: Dean McCartney

The title of this chapter comes from a work I created for Vanessa Tomlinson in 2011. The starting point for *The Appearance of Sound* was a series of curved wooden offcuts from the *System Building* water tower.<sup>219</sup> Just as the physical objects used in this piece were residue from *System Building*, so also, are some of the ideas explored. *The Appearance of Sound* was an experiment in paring back the sculptural percussion performance to the simplest form of one percussionist building shapes from small pieces of wood and making sounds as she went. The architectural references and other signifiers are stripped away with only the remnant of the arts administrator role in the construction of *System Building* apparent in the office chair which the percussionist uses to glide up and down the table as she works. The work was initially called *Blocking* to reference the theatre term meaning to block out the movements of actors on the stage. The process of blocking was originally done with actual wooden blocks on a miniature stage before the actors' arrival. As though testing ideas with maquettes for an abstract large-scale sculpture, in this work, the percussionist builds, positions and adjusts the blocks until the audience is left with a tableau for them to gaze at. The work was intended to be visual with only minor incidental

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<sup>219</sup> *The Appearance of Sound* was created for *Cuttings*, a group show exploring sculpture and sound curated by Rosemary Joy at Linden Centre for Contemporary Art in St Kilda in November 2011. The artists Vanessa Tomlinson, Sarah Pirrie, Dale Gorfinkel, Natasha Anderson and Rosemary Joy each occupied a room at Linden with a sculptural sound installation.

sounds made as the abstract shapes were manipulated by the percussionist and used to build new structures. *The Appearance of Sound* plays with a tautology that the work is percussion because a percussionist is performing it. Audiences have come up with diverse interpretations of the work, for example, trying to read the sculptural shapes left at the end of the piece as some kind of script. The work explored the assumption that there will be music because a percussionist was performing. The work was first presented in a gallery so that when there were no performances, the work was viewed by gallery visitors as sculptures only or as the residue of the percussion performance.

*The Appearance of Sound* removes the boxes and found objects of my earlier sculptural percussion works to leave only shapes. In some ways, this step is parallel to that of sculptor Louise Nevelson who worked extensively with found objects in boxes before taking away the structures to create freestanding sculptures. As she wrote:

I had been through the enclosures of wood; I had been through the shadow. I had been through the enclosure of light and reflection. And now I was ready to take away the enclosures and come out into the open<sup>220</sup>

Another research project, which stripped away the previous parameters of my work in sculptural percussion, was developed with percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson in 2014.<sup>221</sup> *The Beginnings of Sleep* was an experiment at creating an experience of intimacy with subtle acoustic sound, but for a larger audience of forty. When the audience entered the performance space, they saw trailing strings connected to a large tin fixed to a stand on the stage. At the end of each string and placed a series of raked seats was a paper cup for each audience member to place against their ear to hear the work. Essentially a large tin can telephone, which attached all the audience members to the musician via string, the work was an experiment in recreating half-remembered fragments of sound, the contrast between near and far and intimate explosions of sound as the performance seemed to happen directly inside the audience's ears as they listened to Vanessa via the cups at their ears. The work was difficult to develop as the sound made by the musician could only be heard at a distance through the string/cup. In rehearsal, Vanessa and I took turns making sounds inside the tin, for example, scraping a serrated knife along the edge, grinding steel wool into the base of the can, tapping with fingers, scratching with finger nails, lightly touching a shell necklace on the base, singing into the tin. Plucking on the strings created an effect like a double bass. I continued the exploration hoping to create a piece somewhat like a distant disintegrating jazz classic faintly heard on a crackly radio while falling asleep. With only

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<sup>220</sup> K.R. Brooke (ed.), *The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend*, published in association with the Jewish Museum New York, p. 22.

<sup>221</sup> *The Beginnings of Sleep* was commissioned and first performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in September 2014.

one string attached to the can, it was a highly sensitive operation to work with as the slightest increase in sound within the tin can would magnify along the string until it was an unbearable assault on the listener's eardrums, immediately destroying any magic and importantly, trust in the exercise. Gradually, through experimentation, we discovered the most interesting sounds that could be played without risking the audience's hearing. Vanessa wasn't familiar with the first song, a mournful 1940's love song that I had selected to be sung in fragments in the final section so I asked if she knew another song of a similar vein. She suggested Irving Berlin's *Blue Skies* which she used to sing to her children as a lullaby, very appropriate to this work in which the audience is gently lulled by the sounds and experience of their literal connection to the music via the string.



Figure 24. Rosemary Joy *The Beginnings of Sleep* (2014)  
Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion), photo: Tangible Media

In performance, to listen to the work each audience member turned in the seat so his or her left ear faced the stage and the cup could be placed against it without the string being tangled. Instructed to keep their string taut, most of the audience had an intensely private experience while being part of a large focussed listening mass. Despite careful instruction, several audience members did not understand the principle of the tin can telephone and did not keep the string taut enough to be able to hear anything. For them, the piece was bewildering as they could see people around them experiencing something and Vanessa playing something but they had no idea what was happening. The rest of the audience reported an intense strangeness of listening to the work. *The Beginnings of Sleep* problematizes sound and the experience of listening with tiny sounds made at a distance inside the tin can magnified in the ear cup. In *Sinister*

*Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener*, David Toop speaks of something similar when he writes of “a distant murmuring mass of birds, at closer quarters found to be loud human shouting, saying nothing intelligible, speaks for the seductive difficulties of sound: where does it come from; who or what is producing it; what are its boundaries; what can it be communicating?”<sup>222</sup> For the listening experience in *The Beginnings of Sleep*, audience members are connected to both the musician and each other via the taut strings and their intense concentration. Seated in a block of forty people, side on to the stage, holding cups to their ears, the audience were an interesting spectacle in their own right. The project was a vivid manifestation of LaBelle’s observation that “sound explicitly brings bodies together. It forces us to come out, in lyrical, antagonistic, and beautiful ways, creating connective moments and deepening the sense for both the present and the distant, the real and the mediated.”<sup>223</sup>

The final work that I will discuss in this exegesis, is called *Fratrem* a solo work, also created for Vanessa Tomlinson, as an experiment in taking sculptural percussion out of the intimate confines of the small audience to the concert hall. As the work was developed for radio broadcast, primacy had to be given to the sound rather than the visual element. Incidental sounds made while building wooden sculptures would make no sense at all to a radio listener. As a continuation of the experiment with the tin can for *The Beginnings of Sleep*, I explored a series of vessels as containers for sound. The vessels in this case were discarded industrial spun metal bowls that I discovered when finding fire pits for a sound installation. I came across the bowls in a cage on the edge of a spinning metal workshop and spent several hours testing them for their sonic properties while also selecting them for the beauty of their shapes. When it became clear during rehearsal that *The Beginnings of Sleep* was not practical for a radio broadcast, I brought out the metal bowls and gave Vanessa a simple structure for an improvisation. The mournful and resonant bell-like sounds brought to mind Arvo Pärt’s experiments with tintinnabula and the work developed as an emotional elegy in anticipation of loss. The text score gave the musician space for improvisation within a simple structure while a verbal instruction provided a private motivation to keep in mind during the performance.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> D. Toop, *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener*, New York, Continuum, 2010, p.23.

<sup>223</sup> LaBelle, 2010, p. 26.

<sup>224</sup> See Appendix 7 for the *Fratrem* score. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of David Young who suggested creating sound by rolling the small rubber ball round the bowl.



Figure 25. Rosemary Joy *Fratrem* (2014),  
Vanessa Tomlinson (percussion) for *8 Hits*, photo: Tangible Media

In the promotional material for the concert *8 Hits* in which *Fratrem* was played, I was listed as a *composer*, a startling development for someone who has always considered herself an *artist*. In a sense, the work marks a new development for my practice, out of the in-between world of site-specific intimate performance and into the concert hall. It is also where the distinctiveness of what I am terming sculptural percussion becomes somewhat blurred, begging the question of how different this work is from any collection of found objects used in a percussion piece. I would still argue that there is a difference. Where found objects in many contemporary percussion pieces mostly have the random appearance of objects plucked from the recycling bin, the bowls of *Fratrem* have a solemnity in their almost classical forms that brings to mind ancient urns or ritual vessels. Within the concert, the bowls asserted themselves as somehow more than just sound-making objects. Through their weight, shape and the dull gleam of the metal, the bowls conjured associations that added to the way the work was received.

The works developed in the course of my research have a number of common threads: the works from 2008-12 are all made of wood and most also include found objects. They are all, except for the last two works, performed before a limited audience of 3-20 people at a time. *Beauty Boxes* and my contribution towards the collaboration *Yakumo Honjin* are essentially boxes filled with found objects. *System Building* includes boxes and found objects that are reconfigured as building blocks so the stable forms can be pulled apart and rebuilt into a new structure. In these three works, the musician plays fairly formally at a table or on the floor with the space occupied by the sculpture quite distinct from the musician's own body. In *Xantolo*, the musician and sculpture occupy the same space, with the musician cross-legged on a low platform surrounded by sculptures and found objects. *The Appearance of Sound* takes the disintegration of *System Building* further with a series of shapes that do not have compartments or reference points to

other structures. The final two works take my practice out of the small, secluded site-specific spaces for a limited audience and into the concert hall. While there are structural similarities between the works, the inspiration of each is wildly divergent, from Mexican religious celebrations to architecture. In each work, there is a high level of care given to the audience experience. The performances are meticulously planned to increase the possibility of the audience's close engagement with the work.

The examination presentation for this PhD included performances of *The Appearance of Sound*, *System Building*, *Fratrem* and also the sculptural percussion component of *Yakumo Honjin*. The audience was met in the foyer of Melbourne's Dancehouse and then led outside and down an alleyway to enter the building via a back gate. After walking through the backstage area, the audience went through a side door to find themselves on a small stage with the curtain drawn and on the floor, three percussionists seated on mats in front of three wooden boxes. Invited to kneel in front of the boxes, the audience moved from box to box at the end of each section. When the piece finished, the curtains opened to reveal the darkened hall with only visible a long table covered in a row of wooden shapes for *The Appearance of Sound*.<sup>225</sup> The audience were led through stages from kneeling on the stage in front of the *Yakumo Honjin* boxes then down the stairs off the stage for the other three pieces in turn. As each piece finished, the light came up on the next work.

The works can be understood as part of a tradition of composition and performance developed by Cage and Fluxus. Brandon LaBelle characterises Cage and Fluxus projects as

Theatrical presentations of material processes that generate sound as by-products: music as open form. Yet, the presence of sound, and the belief in the possibility of its immediacy to lead us to 'real' experience, brings with it the problematics of social reality: Cage's extravagant confusion draws us to an intensity of sonic viewpoint and the aesthetic gags of Fluxus refer us to an intensity of real materials and real effects.<sup>226</sup>

My sculptural percussion works give prominence to the relationship between the visual and aural heightening the audience's sense of connection to both the musician and the unfolding sculpture in front of them. The "intensity of real materials and real effects" which LaBelle refers to above results in a subtle experience of micro-sounds heard while closely observing the musician's interaction with the sculptures. The senses intercommunicate but our experience of the sense of

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<sup>225</sup> The moment of opening the curtain was a quotation from Aphids' project *Maps*, which was performed in 2000 at the North Melbourne Town Hall. The audience was led in small groups through the hall before finally entering the stage in the auditorium to hear a piece of music. The curtains then opened to reveal the auditorium filled with plinths, on each a person in costume or an object and soprano Helle Thun singing magnificently from a high balcony opposite.

<sup>226</sup> LaBelle, 2006, p. 144.

sight and sound is quite different. As Douglas Kahn writes "visuality overwhelms aurality in the cultural balance of the senses."<sup>227</sup> However, it is possible to feel separate from the visual world, gazing out as though viewing our surroundings through a flat screen TV with a feeling of differentiation that sound does not allow as it literally penetrates our bodies. As LaBelle writes

Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. It seemingly eludes definition, while having profound effect.<sup>228</sup>

In most of the sculptural percussion works described here, the visual and sonic elements blend in performance while the proximity of musician to audience creates a concentrated listening experience. Sculptural percussion transforms objects through performance. Adjusting one object creates incidental sounds and a flow of movement between all the pieces. The score or set of instructions reveals an internal logic between the arrangements of shapes. The works contribute to the field of percussion by creating a delicate, deliberate connection between musician and audience; by highlighting the way that the visual resonance of an object will affect the perception of sound; by bringing to the foreground the sculptural quality of percussion. Whether giant drums, rows of cymbals or tables of found objects, the physical properties of the percussionist's instruments are prominent but usually not acknowledged. In contrast, for sculptural percussion, the relationship between the visual and material properties of the object and the sound they produce is heightened creating an experience of subtle sound which may then trigger a greater awareness of sounds by the audience as they go about their daily lives. I have observed that the experience has the potential to delight and transport audiences;<sup>229</sup> that when the musician is delighted by the instrument, they will convey that feeling to the audience.

The intimacy of sculptural percussion works such as *System Building*, *Yakumo Honjin* and *Beauty Boxes* gives audiences a direct experience of listening to micro-sounds without amplification. The works find a way to honour, contain and present the memories and ideas bestowed on and held by collections of found objects. They experiment with abstract and classical sculptural shapes with an emphasis on the surface of the wood and metal, which adds a lustre to the experience of sound created from them. The works are carefully structured and rehearsed while leaving scope for the musician to experiment and expand on ideas within the composition. Writing about earlier sculptural percussion work *Schallmaschine 06*, Chris Reid gets

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<sup>227</sup> Kahn, p. 158.

<sup>228</sup> LaBelle, p. ix.

<sup>229</sup> See Appendices 10-12 for critical reviews, which reveal that my intentions were at least in part realised on a small selection of audience members.

to the heart of what distinguishes these projects from more conventionally presented contemporary percussion pieces:

The musician plays with time, memory, weight and texture and synaesthetic response. Terms such as 'drummer' and 'percussionist' locate this music within particular musical traditions but don't fully acknowledge the dramatic, compositional and improvisational elements of these performances.<sup>230</sup>

My work in sculptural percussion focuses on increasing awareness of the connection between action and the resulting sounds. The triangle created by musician, sculpture and audience results in a warm exchange between people and a delicate and focussed listening experience. Rather than aiming for a purely aesthetic experience, this is an art that is motivated to connect people and increase their aliveness to the sounds that they make and hear.

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<sup>230</sup> C. Reid, Reid, Chris, 'Joyous Music, Modest Means', *RealTime* issue #76, Dec-Jan 2006 p.32. The review also refers to a solo percussion concert by Fritz Hauser.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: *Beauty Boxes* score

#### Both boxes

1. Gently knock, stroke and tap drawers and box fingers 0-1'
2. Open and close drawers slowly like a piston 1-2'

#### Box 1

3. Play fabric covered woodblock vigorously alternating mf/pp/p 2-3'
4. Swirl beads so they look like a herd of wild animals seen from the air,  
at times only a few beads moving 3-4'
5. Press yellow fabric like testing a loaf of bread, Scratch nail and/or with sticks
6. Prick yellow fabric gently with needle 4-5'

#### Box 2

3. Rub scourer on beads then twist in hands
4. Swirl beads so they look like a herd of wild animals seen from the air,  
at times only a few beads moving 3-4'
5. Play orange fabric with sticks so it emerges a like a blossoming flower  
Then flap it around 4-5'
6. Swirl tassel in base of box, then wider on sides 5-6'



## **Appendix 2: System Building score (1-4)**

Netherlands, Berlin, Sydney and Melbourne

### **Instructions for musicians**

1.      Musician #1 Play outside of Watertoren West and assemble into new form  
         Musician #2 Dismantle Carriageworks and build into new form    2'
2.      Musician #1 Reveal Radialsystem V, setting up tower as you go 2'  
         Musician #2 Play Melbourne Recital Centre and assemble into tower
3.      Organise pieces according to type    1.30'
4.      Play light rapid, pp                    2.30'  
         One musicians builds new city while other plays remaining pieces, spacious, delicate.  
         4'

### Appendix 3: *System Building* score (1-5)

#### **China**

Performed by Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott

Some instructions by Rosemary Joy, October 2010

This work has three parts:

#### **1. REVEALING 6'**

Each building is carefully and with reverence, dismantled and rebuilt to reveal something new

Red Gate Gallery – the assembled skyscrapers presage the city at the end

- the gongs loudly announce the work has begun
- Watertoren West/Carriageworks – find one moment of drama or point of connection in gesture and or sound
- Radial System V/Melbourne Recital centre – find one moment of drama or point of connection with the other musician in gesture and or sound

#### **2. ORGANISING 2'**

This is a duo, a quiet duo with incidental sounds of footsteps and pieces being picked up and laid flat.

Each gesture is deliberate. There is no excess or wasted movement.

Important to maintain the concentration and attitude of the musician

Matthias

- Take perspex and metal to metal section
- - Arrange metal
- Take Red Gate chessboard pieces to Eugene
- Arrange triangles

Eugene

- Arrange Watertoren West
- Take remaining metal and small scraps of wood to Matthias

- Return with Carriageworks boxes and arrange all boxes
- Arrange Melbourne Recital Centre then Red Gate chessboard

### **3. PLAYING AND BUILDING 4'**

First with mallets, a loud attack, then finding texture, subtlety, playfulness

After Two minutes, one continues playing/building with hands, the other playing with mallets

The builder player makes a city, with a main building and surrounding cityscape, perhaps inspired by Beijing

Second last gesture – place Radial System V tower

Last gesture – place water bottle

The other musician plays the evolving city and then returns to the metal to play the delicate twinkling night sky.

#### Appendix 4: Notes given to musicians, *System Building* (1-5)

During rehearsals in Netherlands and Berlin. These notes form the basis for the System Building (1-5) score.

- Tension between focus on sound, and focus on theatricality.
- Important to focus on sound pre-eminently
- More delicate, need to settle on something
- Less is more – texture
- Move when ready – no pause
- One burst of energy
- Less tapping, more delicate, only one squeaking sound dragging finger on wood
- Work on moving at the same time in laying out section
- Don't repeat what the other has done
- Find something new
- Think of an actual city when building
- Need to be delicate when playing metal
- Find a dramatic centre point to building
- Need reduced pallet for section 4 – only metal and boxes
- No unnecessary movement
- Find moments of unity in each section
- Set items as you go
- Move as little as possible, focus on quality of sound
- Keep awareness of sound when building
- Play with a preciousness
- Mixture of slow and rapid gestures when laying out pieces maintaining an awareness of sound
- Choose when to reveal
- sustain revealing
- magic of revealing

## Appendix 5: *Xantolo* score

List of sounds remembered from the Day of the Dead celebrations in the villages of Tancoco, Taminin and Tantayuca in the Huastecan area in North-East Mexico.

### **Tancoco**

- Silence punctuated by insects in the night mountain air
- Guitar, violin, rattles
- Dancers' footsteps in the dust,
- The Day of the Dead altar at Don Hipolito's house; incense burning
- Rain on the roof
- In Spanish "this is the souls of the dead returning"

### **Taminin**

- Crowds in the village square, laughter
- Mass dancing
- Drone of guitar,
- Silence in the church
- Distant muffled sounds of fire crackers
- Shouts
- Low hum of music

### **Tantayuca**

- Happy crowds outside cemetery
- Drumming
- Joyous music from small groups by graves – violin and drums; dancing

Appendix 6: *The Beginnings of Sleep* score

***The Beginnings of Sleep***

for solo percussion

Performed on a large tin can telephone with a paper cup attached by string for each audience member. Implements include steel wool, a serrated knife, a stone, a nail, a shell necklace, a paintbrush

Commissioned by Vanessa Tomlinson, Brisbane

1. Soft tapping on tin, slow and fast using fingers

inside tin *p*

outside tin *mf*

2. Scratching with nail on bottom on tin and on ridges *ppppp*

3. Move brush vertically shaking it over inside base of tin

Circular motion / rhythmic large shapes over ridge

4. Make chaotic shapes inside tin with rock. No ridges

Move rock back and forth on sides to make guiro effect

Tap on sides of can

5. Slowly crunch steel wool against bottom of tin making fire crackling sound. Focussed but not too loud

6. Make crunchy sound with shells half on bottom of tin and half on side

Slide ball of shells up and down side of tin

7. Sing *Blue Skies* gently into tin while continuing sound fragments using some of the above.

## Appendix 7: *Fratrem* score

*Fratrem* (2014)  
for solo percussion

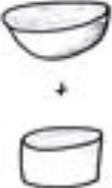
Slow, spacious, elegiac. Performed on a private collection of spun metal shapes

Duration: approximately 6 minutes (each section 1.5')

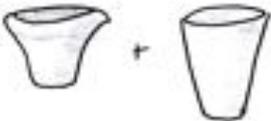
Commissioned by Vanessa Tomlinson for *8 Hits*, a solo percussion concert at Studio 421, ABC Radio, Brisbane.

*Fratrem* by R. Jay

[slow, spacious, elegiac] (for spun metal bowls)

①  bounce and drag a rubber mallet around inside of bowl in circles  
+  
play pairs of notes on outside of bowl with a soft mallet at walking pace

② Range out across the other bowls exploring combinations

③  Play insides of bowls simultaneously, varying the shapes made by the soft mallets - lines, triangles, squares

④  Gently scrape a small cutting knife almost continuously and a small serrated knife ~~almost~~ occasionally across the rim of the large bowl then the small. (hold both knives in one hand)  
+  
 play pairs of notes on outside of bowl with a soft mallet at walking pace.

## Appendix 8: *Yakumo Honjin* scores

By David Young, 2009 for first performance in Matsue, Shimane, Japan, 20 March 2009.

Aphids in collaboration with Sphere (Japan):

David Young (music), Rosemary Joy (sculptural percussion), Peter Humble (video), Eugene Ughetti (percussion), Matthias Schack-Arnott (percussion), Yasutaka Hemmi (violin), Takayo (harp)

**Percussion: Scissors**

There is one page of score for the Scissors Percussion instrument, and a set of instructions.

**watercolour lines**

Orientation of the page is landscape. Scribble between *ppppp* and *pp*.

Leaving the box closed, making sweeping and gentle tapping gestures with the fingers and hands on the top and sides of the box, as though writing. Avoid harsh scratching and squeaking sounds.

The gestures should correspond to the grey and black calligraphic markings on the score, reading from right to left.

Each line should be five to ten seconds, followed by the set of instructions. The total duration of each section should be about two minutes.

**1st line - spear**  
Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.  
With the small dagger, sharpen the metal spear.  
Pick up the spear and make a squeaking sound by twisting the metal head.  
Pick up the metal spear and make gentle whistling sounds by blowing into it.  
Place the wooden handle in the lid and gently rock it back and forth.  
Return the spear and dagger to their original positions.  
Replace the lid.

**2nd line -scissors**  
Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.  
With the small dagger, scrape along each curve of the scissors.  
Scrape along the spearhead.  
Scrape along the wooden handle, adding a few gentle taps.  
Pick up the scissors and snip them in the air.  
Return the scissors, spear and dagger to their original positions.  
Replace the lid.

**3rd line - key**  
Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.  
With the small dagger, play the ridges of the key like a guiro.  
With the tip of the spear, play the ridges of the key like a guiro.  
Pick up the key and balance it over the edge of the box.  
Set it rocking back and forth, and tap it with the dagger.  
Insert the dagger through the key's hole and pluck the dagger like a kalimba.  
Keeping plucking and change the pitch by adjusting the length of the dagger.  
Return the key, spear and dagger to their original positions.  
Replace the lid.

## Percussion: Paper

There is one page of score for the Paper Percussion instrument, and a set of instructions.

### watercolour lines

Orientation of the page is landscape. Sempre between *ppppp* and *pp*.

Leaving the box closed, making sweeping and gentle tapping gestures with the fingers and hands on the top and sides of the box, as though writing. Avoid harsh scratching and squeaking sounds.

The gestures should correspond to the grey and black calligraphic markings on the score, reading from right to left.

Each line should be five to ten seconds, followed by the set of instructions. The total duration of each section should be about two minutes.

### 1st line - nibs

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.

Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.

Slide open a panel and take out the nib case. Shake the nib case.

Open the nib case and tip the nibs into your hand and shake them.

Spill the nibs on to a panel. Rock individual nibs as they sit on the panel.

Sweep all the nibs into the box.

Reveal the bingo numbers. Place a finger on one bingo number and jerk it around a little, moving the bingo numbers all around.

Close the panels.

Replace the lid.

### 2nd line - paper

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.

Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.

Open a panel and find the strips of paper.

Open the middle panel, choose a bingo number and roll it into the box.

Count out a number of strips of paper, flicking through them like banknotes.

Find the nibs, select one and write something on a strip of paper.

Return the objects to their original places and close the panels.

Replace the lid.

### 3rd line - bingo

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.

Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.

Open panels to find the bingo numbers.

Select four bingo numbers and close the middle panel.

Place the four bingo numbers on the middle panel, on their edges.

Remove another panel and balance it on the bingo numbers.

Wobble the top panel a little.

Place the nibs on top of the panel.

Take another panel and fan the nibs so that they shudder.

Tip the nibs into the box and replace the bingo numbers.

Place two panels on inclines in the lid to create a v-shaped ramp.

Roll some bingo numbers down one ramp so that they roll back and forth.

Return the nibs to the nibcase, and then return all the objects to their original positions. Close the panels.

Replace the lid.



## Percussion: Rock

There is one page of score for the Rock Percussion instrument, and a set of instructions.

### watercolour lines

Orientation of the page is landscape. *Sempre* between *ppppp* and *pp*.

Leaving the box closed, making sweeping and gentle tapping gestures with the fingers and hands on the top and sides of the box, as though writing. Avoid harsh scratching and squeaking sounds.

The gestures should correspond to the grey and black calligraphic markings on the score, reading from right to left.

Each line should be five to ten seconds, followed by the set of instructions. The total duration of each section should be about two minutes.

### 1st line - sand

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.  
Using your fingers, trace lines and shapes in the sand.  
Try to avoid exposing the hidden rocks.  
Gently explore the sounds that can be made with the sand.  
Replace the lid.

### 2nd line -boxes

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Take the lid off the box and place it to the righthand side of the box.  
With light and slightly dramatic gestures, adjust the position of the small wooden boxes to different angles within the box.  
Pause to observe after each adjustment.  
Continuing adjusting the small wooden boxes in different ways.  
Return the small wooden boxes to their original positions.  
Replace the lid.

### 3rd line - rocks

Writing on the lid, reading the watercolour line.  
Moving your fingers slowly through the sand, discover one of the rocks.  
Discover another rock.  
Gently scrape one rock against another – one in your hand and one remaining in the sand.  
Return the rocks to their original positions.  
Lift each small wooden box and gently shake it to hide the rocks and smooth the surface of the sand.  
Replace the lid.



## **Appendix 9: Technical requirements: *System Building* in China**

- 3 x tables (approx 2m long x 850 wide and 850 high)
- 14 chairs for the audience
- 1 x chair for the usher
- basic down lighting

### **Performance schedule**

- 1 x rehearsal day
- 7 performances/day over 2 days
- Ideally, two blocks of performances - four performances at 20 minute intervals, a 1-2 hour break then three more performances at 20 minute intervals

### **Staffing**

- 2 ushers minimum
- one supervisor

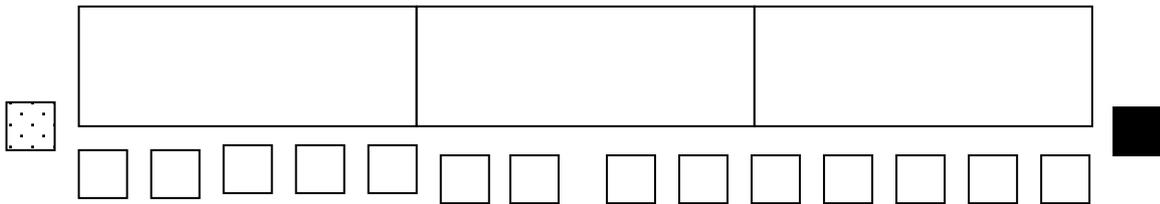
### **Performance schedule**

1. The audience will meet in the gallery foyer.
2. They will be lead by an usher #1 to the performance site.
3. The usher will tell the audience to sit in a chair in front of the table.
4. At the completion of the performance, the usher must give the audience time to clap and contemplate the work. (approximately 1 minute). After that, the usher will guide the audience back downstairs, ideally via a different route so that they won't meet the next audience group on the way in.
5. While a performance is in progress, Usher #2 will gather their group together and wait for the signal that the previous performance has finished and it is time to go to the performance site.
6. the performance goes for 12-14 minutes

### **NOTES to performances**

- The Front of House supervisor will allocate audience members to their groups

- There is a maximum of 14 people seated for each performance. 2 extra chairs can be put at each end of the line so that it curves around the table for additional 2 audience members.
- If there are large numbers of people wanting to see the work, it is possible to have people standing behind the chairs, however, this is not ideal and the experience will not be very good. Where possible, it is best to keep audiences to 14.
- Latecomers cannot be admitted
- The musicians will need to be given a signal that the audience is approaching.
- Audiences cannot enter the performance space until the previous performance is completed and the previous audience has left.



14 audience chairs plus 2 extra chairs (shaded)

**Notes to reviews:**

**The following reviews are examples of the effect created by these works on audiences. They reveal that my intentions were at least in part realised on a small selection of audience members.**

Appendix 10: Review: 'Reliving Mexico's day of the dead', The Age

WHEN we're led into the Salon space of the Melbourne Recital Centre for Monday night's performance of *Xantolo*, the latest musical offering from Melbourne-based cultural collective Aphids, our first sensation is not sound but smell. It is the pungent aroma of incense, a scent that spills, we soon discover, from the stage. It is, quite plainly, a beguilingly adorned platform, an altar of sorts, strewn with a sea of meticulously arranged objects. There are brilliant orange calendula flowers, whose petals have been torn and sprinkled across a multi-coloured cloth. There are domestic implements - a crystal vase, ceramic and wooden bowls - aside bread rolls, a *teponaztli* (Mexican wooden slit drums) and *garrahand*.

Candles shed their glow on dishes of freshly ground coffee and spices, while a series of bells and chimes, suspended from the ceiling on wire, glint silently. Seated cross-legged in the midst of these treasures is Mexican performer Evaristo Aguilar, his head bowed while an audience of 20 take their seats just a hair's breadth from his toes.

The lights dim and a voice-over plays. *Xantolo* (Day of the Dead), we learn, is a tradition of Mexico, a celebration in which the living commune with deceased loved ones. It is a remembrance of souls through rituals, the preparation of food and the playing of music.

Aguilar, who collaborated with locally based instrument maker Rosemary Joy to create the piece, is a native of the La Huasteca region, where Joy travelled before crafting his tools. Just 15 minutes in duration, *Xantolo* begins with Aguilar immersing himself in a playful and almost childlike toying with the instruments at his fingertips.

But gradually the mood deepens into a trance-like meditation on the feeling of sound. At one point, Aguilar picks up a series of clay fingers and, fitting them to his own digits, proceeds to play them like xylophone keys. He dips bells into bowls of water, hums and sighs, in turn making the air around our ears wash and eddy. For one moment, purple vibraphone in hand, he is a shaman. When he finishes, he wipes tears from his eyes. It's a performance that will stay with its audience for some time.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> L. Power, 'Reliving Mexico's day of the dead', The Age, November 4, 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/music/reliving-mexicos-day-of-the-dead/2009/11/04/1257247622272.html>

Appendix 11: Review: 'Music for the Quick and the Dead', Realtime

by Chris Reid, RealTime issue #94 Dec-Jan 2009 pg. 46

I am in the first cohort of people to witness the world premiere performance of Xantolo. Twenty of us are seated in a single row on three sides of a low platform, in the middle of which sits Mexican percussionist Evaristo Aguilar surrounded by an array of percussion instruments, flowers, candles and bread.

Xantolo means day of the dead in the Huastecan language of Mexico and, for Mexicans, the Day of the Dead is an annual holiday of remembrance of deceased relatives and friends. This is the first of five performances on November 2, a day which marks All Souls Day in the Catholic Church and the second of the two traditional days of Mexican observance.

Following a taped introduction outlining the origins of the work, Aguilar begins to play the percussion instruments—wooden blocks and tubes, brass bowls and plates, small cymbals, drums, rattles, metal and wooden chimes and found porcelain and glass bowls.

He plays gently, almost caressingly, using drumsticks or his hands, each instrument making carefully tuned resonant tones, and he pours dried grains of corn to create a percussive sound. The 15-minute performance appears ritualised, as if we are being led through prayer or meditation, and the dance rhythms are hypnotic. Limiting the audience to 20 allows an uninterrupted view of the performer and also enjoins audience members as an extended family group sitting closely around the table. The instruments are simple and beautiful and some are symbolically suggestive—the bowls represent the home and corn is a staple food—while others have been designed by Aphids artist Rosemary Joy specifically for this work, evoking the kinds of sounds heard on such occasions and perhaps the spirits of the dead themselves.

This production continues Aphids' long-established concern with collaborative and cross-cultural performance. Evidently, Joy visited Mexico and witnessed Day of the Dead celebrations in Huastecan culture, which combine pre-Columbian and Catholic traditions, and which are typically festive occasions, with participants in costume singing and dancing, and a table or altar in each home set with flowers, bread (pan de muerto), rosaries and candles. A structured improvisation, the work is part percussion performance and part theatrical presentation, an abstraction of certain characteristics of Huastecan Xantolo celebrations, though perhaps more muted and internal. A window into another culture, it is thus a mirror onto our own.

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The Melbourne Recital Centre has on its web-site an interview between its CEO Jacques de Vos Malan and Rosemary Joy and Aphids artistic director David Young discussing the origins of the work. Placed in this context, the performance becomes much more than a fine percussion piece. Aguilar, a professor of percussion in Mexico, has adapted traditional Huastecan musical forms for presentation internationally. The Melbourne Recital Centre has taken a bold step in supporting a work with a radically different form of presentation, limiting the audience to 100 in five shifts, but the intimacy and close attention afforded are vital to understanding and appreciating this absorbing work.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> <http://www.realtimearts.net/article/94/9670>

Appendix 12: Review: 'Rosemary Joy - *System Building*', *Resonate Magazine*

by Geoffrey Gartner, *Resonate Magazine*, Australian Music Centre, 10/12/2009

"The performance itself takes the form of a controlled improvisation in which the two percussionists gradually deconstruct, then reassemble the models, playing the various parts the entire time. The gradual dismantling of the miniature structures reveals their complexity, comprising myriad parts, filled with holes, secret compartments, and sliding panels. All these constituent parts are utilised to create sound: blowing across the apertures of the blocks, hitting one against another, rubbing, scraping.

Every conceivable combination of material and surface is used in the production of sound, no matter how soft or fleeting. The percussionists probe the myriad ridges, indentations and corrugations with their fingertips in what is equal parts exploration and performance.

It all happens within an atmosphere of hushed reverence, the dynamic never straying beyond *sotto voce*. In such a remarkably quiet environment, Cageian notions of silence inevitably spring to mind - one becomes painfully aware of the unceasing hum of the lighting, the rumble of a neighbour's stomach.

By the half-way point the table looks like an exploded Flux-box, and is strewn with blocks of wood, tiny pipes and bits of Plexiglas. The percussionists then employ a selection of metal and wooden knitting needles to elicit a whole new palette of sounds. Constantly tinkering and tapping, they slowly begin a reconstruction process, combining parts from the different models to create new structures. Child's play! The two performances I witnessed had radically different outcomes.

This was quite unlike any other percussion performance I had experienced: no indulgent tirades of volume and rhythm here, just the gentlest of scrapes and taps. It was enthralling stuff, and Espinosa and Ughetti performed with consummate skill, each sleight of hand becoming an integral part of the sonic experience itself. The audience watched it all with quiet fascination, the kids were rapt.

Throughout the entire proceedings the two performers exuded a wonderful, warm generosity of spirit, and made one as an audience member feel wholly included as a part of the installation. It's weirdly charming watching someone playing a miniature version of the very building in which you are sitting at that very moment.

With its short running time, *System Building* was a pleasant change from so much of today's contemporary music programming, where it is fashionable to stuff as much challenging music

into an evening as possible. How refreshing it was to emerge from a new music performance with viscera intact! The Berliners really took to it, lapping up twenty-five shows in a matter of days.

With *System Building*, Rosemary Joy has created an original and thought-provoking work which can be enjoyed on many levels. As I was sitting outside the hall waiting for the next show, a small boy emerged from a performance exclaiming, "that was fun!" I heartily concurred. However, truly appreciating the sophisticated conceits of *System Building* requires an engagement of the intellect, a reappraisal of the senses. This was not just music for the ears and eyes, but for the mind as well, and I ruminated on the experience for days." <sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> <http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/article/rosemary-joy-system-building>

Appendix 13: Article – ‘Site and Sound: Rosemary Joy’s *System Building*’

By Ulanda Blair, Printed in UnMagazine, Volume 3.2, pp. 37-39.<sup>234</sup>

The relationship between music and the body is an intimate and slippery one. Our experience with music is somehow more direct and unmediated than it is with the visual; you can look away and you can close your eyes, but you can’t close your ears. Sound is immersive and inescapable; you feel it resonating through your skull, in the pit of your stomach and in the air vibrating against your skin. Listening to music, you perform complex mathematical analysis instantly and instinctively, searching for resolution, looking for repetition as the rhythms and frequencies of music interact with those of the body and brain, modifying them, manipulating them.

For *System Building*, an interdisciplinary arts project currently touring The Netherlands, Germany and Australia, Melbourne-based visual artist Rosemary Joy has created an intensely intimate visual and aural experience that harnesses the emotional resonances of music. As a trained sculptor working in collaboration with master woodworker Adam Stewart, Joy handcrafts miniature wooden objects that are then performed by trained percussionists. *System Building* is the latest production by the cross-artform performance company Aphids, a Melbourne-based, artist led organisation whose projects frequently involve contemporary music, international cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations.

In *System Building*, the design and construction of Joy’s modular percussion instruments has been directly informed by the striking architectural spaces within which they are being played, namely Watertoren West in Groningen, Radialsystem V in Berlin, the Melbourne Recital Centre, and CarriageWorks in Sydney. Using both traditional and non-traditional performance spaces, the project is an experiment in site-specificity that collapses macroscopic and microscopic forms. *System Building* explores both the acoustic and visual qualities of specific buildings, merging the aesthetics of architecture and sculpture with exploration of experimental music, to create a profoundly affecting audience experience.

*System Building* made its world premiere at the Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival in Groningen, The Netherlands, in August. There, an audience of just twelve people was guided up into the highest reaches of the historic Watertoren West, a fifty-six metre tall functioning water tower. With its epic cylindrical form and its monumental occupation of the site, Watertoren West resembles *The Monument to the Third International (Tatlin’s Tower)*, a likeness that is captured in Joy’s sculpture. But where Vladimir Tatlin’s Constructivist building was envisaged as a

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<sup>234</sup> [http://www.adam-douglass.com/un\\_3.2\\_web\\_final2.pdf](http://www.adam-douglass.com/un_3.2_web_final2.pdf)

bombastic symbol of modernity, Joy's sculptural simulacrum eschews grandiosity and metaphor, favouring instead modest minimalist forms defined by geometry, cubic shapes, an equality of parts, repetition and neutral surfaces. Handcrafted from African rosewood and rock maple, the four miniature sculptures created for *System Building* speak to the personal connections we forge with objects as a means to commemorate and replicate a precious experience or space.

The formal reductiveness of Joy's sculptures extends to their performance. In *System Building*, Joy has provided her two percussionists with a score for structured improvisation with just five written instructions, leaving space for interpretation during each performance. The work remains open to multiple inputs, and to unimpeded and non-intentional activities that may or may not produce sound. An expanded sonic palette is contained within each of the miniature sculptures, and new percussive capabilities are discovered with each performance. Following numerous experimental composers before her, Joy

... is not concerned with prescribing a defined time-object whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but [is] more excited by the prospect of outlining a situation in which sounds may occur, a process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional rules.<sup>235</sup>

In the *System Building* performances, two percussionists, Mexican Diego Espinosa and Australian Eugene Ughetti, stand poised over their instruments as the small audience enters the space. The concertgoers, seated in unusually close proximity to the musicians as well as to each other, sit in silence, adjusting to the stillness of their environment before being gently plunged into an acute state of sonic awareness. Like blossoming flowers, the instruments' composite parts are tenderly opened out, the creaking hinges and sliding drawers piercing the noiseless skin that envelops the space. As the performers' fingertips gently begin to caress the smooth wooden surfaces — slowly at first but becoming livelier — every scrape, rasp, rattle and tap is amplified. Sticks, rocks, scaffolding and wood-fragments sourced on-site create vibrations and isolated chimes, lending the work an additional atmospheric (and site responsive) dimension.

For twelve minutes, a range of quietly textured sounds are sensitively elicited from the miniature sculptural objects, creating a stripped-back narrative that courses through the performance space. Space itself becomes elastic, and the undulating timbres and tempos force a renewed attention to the cavernous architecture whose macroscopic scale is slowly sucked inward by the intimate display. In this intensely focused environment, Espinosa and Ughetti's nimble hands become puppet-like, their palms, fingernails and fingertips presenting as signifiers for the performers themselves. For the audience, the *System Building* performances are at once

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<sup>235</sup> Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 27.

intensely private and powerfully collective experiences, with the close proximity of bodies essential to the creation of the heightened physical and aural space.

In an age of digital and polyphonic phrasing, where our aural experience of space is mediated largely by the pre-programmed beeps and bleeps of new technologies — of mobile phones, personal computers, cash registers, gaming consoles and Global Positioning Systems — Joy's *System Building* forces a recalibration. By slowing down the body, and by creating an ephemeral and intimate space for the contemplation of subtle visual and aural stimuli, Joy gives sense to the ways music, sculpture and architecture can all mutate and challenge each other. In *System Building* sound is referential and descriptive of the world and, in particular, descriptive of the specific spaces in which the performances are held. By stepping outside the normal limitations of her visual art form, Joy has created an expansive artistic language capable of re-igniting intense emotional states in one capricious moment.

Ulanda Blair is an independent arts writer and former Artistic Program Manager at Next Wave.

Appendix 14: Article – ‘Rosemary Joy and the Sound World in Miniature’

by Anni Heino, printed online in *Resonate*, Australian Music Centre, 27/11/2008<sup>236</sup>

Ensemble Offspring will premiere two new Australian works in their forthcoming concert on 10 December: Michael Smetanin's new piece and Rosemary Joy's *Beauty Boxes* - a structured improvisation for two percussionists. In this interview, Joy talks about her exquisite, wooden miniature instruments, about the people who play them and the people who get involved by observing and listening.



*'There is something about the intimacy of the audience sitting so close that kind of strips bare the performer. There is no anonymity or hiding behind a huge drum, it's just completely exposed.'*

Rosemary Joy's art revolves around exquisite sculptures - percussive instruments on a miniature scale. In her current project, *Beauty Boxes* for Ensemble Offspring's percussionists Claire Edwardes and Bree van Reyk, Joy's precious, handmade instruments take the familiar form of a beautifully crafted, wooden box, opening up a whole, new world of sound to both performers and the audience. How did someone with a training in visual arts end up fascinated about sound, collaborating with leading percussionists and voluntarily restricting her audiences to just a handful of people at any one time? It turns out Joy had some formative musical experiences that lacked subtlety and had to do with big and loud audiences.

'I have a visual arts background, but I also spent a number of years playing in a rock band, an all-girl band. It was fun at the time, but I became increasingly frustrated with the idea of just cranking out these songs over and over again. What I am doing now is almost like a reaction to that experience of performing very loud music to a mass of drunken people - one extreme in my past - compared to now creating subtle sounds for a very small number of people. There's a kind of

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<sup>236</sup> <http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/article/rosemary-joy-and-the-sound-world-in-miniature>

preciousness to the experience that the audience has with the miniature percussion - everything is handmade and unique as opposed to mass-produced.'

Many of the projects Joy has been involved with have been collaborations involving herself and the composer David Young, under the umbrella of the Melbourne-based Aphids organisation. Her first projects with Aphids had to do with creating sculptural scores - the next step was a collaboration with percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson, sculptures that were not just scores but also instruments.

'Initially they were all devised with a particular percussionist in mind: they were custom-built for a specific person, to create sounds that would delight that person. It was almost an idea that the instrument would be only played by that person, in that particular event, and once the event had happened, it wouldn't happen any more', Joy explains.

*Beauty Boxes* grew out of a recent miniature percussion project called *Underground* that she and David Young created in 2007. The Dutch percussion ensemble Slagwerkgroep Den Haag performed the work. The Australian percussionist Claire Edwardes was one of the performers and started to talk to Rosemary Joy about a new project. The idea started to take form while Joy was watching the performances in The Hague.

'A new work can start with an initial conversation with the percussionist about their favourite sounds, or I work from the architecture of the space that the work will be performed in. Then I'll go off and create the instrument and later take it back to the musician and composer. Each project is different, though, and I'm interested in working in different ways. To begin with, I was quite rigid, I only wanted to work in the same way, starting with the musician's favourite sounds, and the work would only be performed once. It has become more and more flexible.'



Instruments from the project *Underground*

© Heidrun Löhrr

This has meant that a work like *Underground* has been picked up by different people in different countries. It has already been performed by musicians in the Netherlands, in Mexico, in Italy and in Japan. The size of the audience for *Underground* varied, too - in Belgium there was an audience of four at a time. The performances in Japan an unusually large audience for Joy - all 20 of them.

'One of the smallest audiences would have been for the *Schallmaschine 06* project with an audience of three and a solo percussionist. That was a collaboration between the Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser, architect Boa Baumann, Aphids and Speak Percussion that took place underneath Federation Square during the Melbourne Festival 2006. *Schallmaschine 07:klein* was a further development of the work in Basel in 2007. I've had the enormous privilege to see my instruments being performed by many, many different percussionists.'

Rosemary Joy is usually not particularly involved with the rehearsal process. She sits and observes and might take on the practical role of an usher during the performance. Her interest lies in the meeting of the percussionist and the audience, through the wooden sound sculpture.

'There is something about the intimacy of the audience sitting so close that kind of strips bare the performer. There is no anonymity or hiding behind a huge drum, they are just completely exposed. Most of the people I've worked with have found it really refreshing. I think there's been one or two that have been a little bit confronted and a bit daunted by it. And often, after the performance, the audience will stay and talk and have this real engagement with the musicians. There's no waiting until you get out into the foyer.'



More instruments from the project *Underground*

© Heidrun Löhrr

'And just as it can be a challenge for the musician to have the proximity, it also demands more from the audience. They can't not be attentive to what is happening because they are so close. The musicians can tell if they are drifting off or looking at their program, they can't do all that. '

Rosemary Joy started off by working with fabrics (she devised a musical ball gown instrument for the percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson), but soon her attention turned to wooden miniature instruments. They have proved to be the perfect way of exploring the link between sculpture and music.

'For many years, I've been interested in that link. To work with Aphids has created an incredible forum in which to explore a range of ideas within the context of cross-artform collaborations. It has been really inspiring to work with composer David Young on many occasions. I have always been fascinated by percussion, the incredible flexibility of it - that anything can be played. I find percussionists have that openness to leap into the unknown. I think a lot of percussionists also like the idea of playing these very small objects, rather than lugging massive gear around and then spending three hours trying to set it up, and then pack up again in the end. That's been a thing they really enjoy, just having a very small box with everything in it. And that's the show.'

*Beauty Boxes* will give the two percussionists relatively free hands to improvise, based on instructions provided by Joy.

'I had quite a clear idea in my mind of how I wanted the boxes to be approached, so I'm developing a list of instructions for the musicians - it will be a structured improvisation. I always make the instruments with a clear idea of the possibilities there. Many times I've been surprised and delighted by what the musicians and David have discovered. In this case, I was interested to make the instrument with a sense of the score in my mind, rather than making them and handing them over.'

'These boxes are relatively simple compared to some others that have been quite complex. It's basically two, identical boxes with three drawers in each, a little bit reminiscent of a jewellery box, or a box of precious objects. The boxes themselves can be played - I've used African rosewood that's very resonant and has a beautiful sound quality - and there are also found objects inside the drawers that can be played.'

There are some obvious challenges in organising a concert with both big pieces for normal audiences and intimate pieces for a strictly limited audience. *Beauty Boxes* will form a part of a concert program, but only the first 50 audience members - in groups of ten - will get to experience it.

'It will be basically set up like a dinner party, with two musicians on one side and the audience on the other side. It will be staged in the dressing rooms at the back of the Performance Space at Carriageworks, so that the audience will have a little journey in order to get into this place. It's interesting to see the way that the audience's journey leading into the space actually prepares them and opens their ears to what they are about to hear. I find that quite intriguing: sometimes they have gone and heard one of these pieces, and then when they come out, they are much more tuned to the ambient sounds around them. They can hear the coffee cup hitting the saucer and the key going into the lock, and these sorts of sounds which mostly we are not really sensitised to.'

Joy's instruments are beautiful objects as such and have sometimes been exhibited as conventional sculptures.

'That was okay, but it is the sound that I am really interested in. I'm interested in the way that the sculpture, and being close to it and looking inside it, affects people's experience of the sound.'

The space in which the performance happens is also important, and some of her works are very site-specific.

'Some of the instruments have been inspired by the architecture of the venue in which the performances were held. Next year I'll be working on a big project with Aphids, called *System Building*. It's basically a tour to a number of different venues, and the work itself will be a version of the tour in miniature, the musicians will move from instrument to instrument, and each instrument is inspired by one of the buildings in which it is being played. The architecture of the building will be mirrored in the instrument in some way.'

'I'm also creating a work with a Mexican percussionist, Evaristo Aguilar, that is inspired by the Day of the Dead celebrations. Last year I spent some time going to very tiny villages in a remote part of Mexico to observe the celebrations and witness different rituals for the Day of the Dead festivities - an extraordinary experience. I will make a series of instruments and Evaristo will compose and perform this work, called *Xantolo*, first in the Melbourne Recital Centre next year and then in Mexico. And there is also another Aphids project *Yakumo Honjin* which is a collaboration between myself, David Young, film artist Peter Humble and four musicians - it's inspired by a 280-year-old Samurai hotel in Far West Japan - an incredibly beautiful, tranquil space, tiny little rooms, lots of corridors, tatami mats and shoji screens. That work will also go back to Japan.'

Could working in tranquil spaces, producing mostly quiet and subtle sounds have the side effect of making a person intolerant of big sounds, big pieces, and noise? 'I must say my preference is

for sounds that are more at the quieter end of the spectrum. I find I switch off a bit when I'm listening to music that is quite loud. I disengage somehow, I find that when I'm listening to more subtle sounds, my ears open out and I listen more carefully.'

## Appendix 15: Program for PhD presentation

### ***The Appearance of Sound: Listening to Sculptural Percussion***

A presentation of selected works by Rosemary Joy

in partial fulfillment of a PhD Research Degree Thesis by Creative Project.

I have been working in the field which I term *sculptural percussion* since 2000, exploring sculpture performed by percussionists in projects that are often site specific and usually for small audiences of three to twelve people at a time. While the works have diverse sources of inspiration, at their heart is the intermingling of the aural and visual. The silent sculpture is made vocal through the musician's playing. The proximity of the audience to musician, the unexpected journey to the performance space and the scale of the sculptures are intended to create a heightened listening experience.

Rosemary Joy

#### **1. *Yakumo Honjin* excerpt (2009)**

*Yakumo Honjin* was a collaboration by Melbourne arts company Aphids with artist Rosemary Joy, composer David Young and film maker Peter Humble. The work was inspired by a Samurai hotel called Yakumo Honjin in Matsue in far west Japan where the artists undertook a creative development. The original installation/performance allowed the audience to wander through the space to see video projections and pause for intermittent performances on harp, violin and sculptural percussion. This presentation includes the sculptural percussion component for three people at a time. First performed in Matsue Castle in 2009, *Yakumo Honjin* toured to WestSpace Gallery (Melbourne), Elizabeth Bay House (Sydney) and KickArts Contemporary Arts (Cairns) in 2010. Boxes conceived and designed by Rosemary Joy.

Composition by David Young

Performed by Eugene Ughetti, Vanessa Tomlinson and Matthias Schack-Arnott.

Boxes constructed by Adam Stewart; Materials: wood, found objects, sand, salt, stone

#### **2. *The Appearance of Sound* (2011)**

Originally called *Blocking*, from the theatrical term meaning to map out the precise positions of performers in rehearsal, this work is a distillation and abstraction of the relationship between sound, gesture and sculpture explored in the other works. This work was created for and performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at Linden Centre of Contemporary Art in 2011 and in various locations around Darwin by James Teh as part of Darwin Art on Wheels in 2012. This work was originally performed for twelve people at a time.

Conceived, constructed and composed by Rosemary Joy

Performed by Vanessa Tomlinson

Materials: African rosewood

#### **3. *System Building* (2009-10)**

*System Building* is a sculptural percussion work inspired by the buildings in which it was performed. The work was presented in a water tower in Groningen for the Noorderzon Festival, at Radial System V, a former sewerage pumping station in Berlin, Carriageworks, Melbourne Recital Centre and Red Gate Gallery in Beijing in 2009-10 and features sculptures inspired by each building. This work was originally created for and performed by Diego Espinosa and Eugene Ughetti for twelve people at a time.

Conceived, designed and composed by Rosemary Joy

Performed by Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott

Construction by Adam Stewart; Materials: African rosewood and found objects

#### **4. *Fratrem* (2014)**

This work is an elegy in anticipation of loss. While the other sculptural percussion works in this program were created to be performed to very small audiences, *Fratrem* was developed for a concert setting. The work was created for and performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at Studio 420, ABC Radio, Brisbane for live studio broadcast on Classic FM in November 2014.

Conceived, designed and composed by Rosemary Joy

Performed by Vanessa Tomlinson

*With thanks to Elizabeth Dempster, Katie Sfetkidis (lighting), Luke Gleeson (Dancehouse), Vanessa Tomlinson, Eugene Ughetti, Matthias Schack-Arnott, David Young, Peter Humble, Diego Espinosa and Yasutaka Hemmi.*

## Appendix 16: List of Works (1998-2014)

### Sculptural Percussion works discussed in this exegesis

#### *Beauty Boxes, 2008*

*Beauty Boxes* by Rosemary Joy, commissioned and premiered by Sydney based Ensemble Offspring (Claire Edwards and Bree Van Reyk) as part *To the Max* a concert at Carriageworks in 2008. The work was later performed by Edwards and Vanessa Tomlinson in Brisbane at Urban Arts Projects and in Sydney at Paddington Uniting Church as part of *The Listening Museum* in 2013. (photo: Oliver Miller)

#### *System Building, 2009*

Sculptural percussion work by Rosemary Joy, performed by Eugene Ughetti, Diego Espinosa, Matthias Schack-Arnott and Evaristo Aguilar. Performed at Watertoren West, Groeningen, Netherlands; Radial System V, Berlin; Melbourne Recital Centre; Carriageworks, Sydney. Performed in 2010 by Eugene Ughetti, and Matthias Schack-Arnott at Redgate Gallery, Beijing. (photo: Colin Page)

#### *Yakumo Honjin, 2009*

An installation/performance with Peter Humble, Rosemary Joy and David Young with musicians Yasutaka Hemmi (violin), Takayo Matsumura (harp) and Eugene Ughetti (percussion). Presented in 2009 at Karakoro Art Studio, Matsue, Japan and Taiko Yagura, Matsue Castle, Japan; and in 2010 in Melbourne at WestSpace Gallery, in Sydney at Elizabeth Bay House and at KickArts Contemporary Arts in Cairns for the On Edge Festival. (photo: Daisy Noyes)

#### *Xantolo, 2009*

Sculptural percussion collaboration with Evaristo Aguilar, performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre. (photo: Thea Baumann)

#### *The Appearance of Sound, 2011*

Percussive sculpture by Rosemary Joy performed by Vanessa Tomlinson as part of *Cuttings*, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, St Kilda, a group show exploring sculpture and sound curated by Rosemary Joy at Linden Centre for Contemporary Art. The artists Vanessa Tomlinson, Sarah Pirrie, Dale Gorfinkel, Natasha Anderson and Rosemary Joy each occupied a room at Linden with a sculptural sound installation. *The Appearance of Sound* was also performed at various locations for Darwin Art on Wheels, 2012. (photo: Dean McCartney)

#### *The Beginnings of Sleep, 2014*

Sculptural percussion work by Rosemary Joy commissioned and first performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. This project and *Fratrem* were developed for *8 Hits*, a concert of new works commissioned and performed by Vanessa Tomlinson. (photo: Tangible Media)

#### *Fratrem, 2014*

Sculptural percussion work by Rosemary Joy performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at ABC Radio, Studio 420, Brisbane as part of the concert *8 Hits*. Broadcast live on ABC Classic FM. *Fratrem* was performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre in 2015 for *8 Hits*. (photo: Tangible Media)

## Other Sculptural Percussion works by Rosemary Joy



### **Puff, 2000**

Percussive sculpture by Rosemary Joy created for and performed by Vanessa Tomlinson at the Blackwood Gallery, Meat Market. Developed as part of an Aphids residency funded by the Myer Foundation.

*My first experiment in sculptural percussion, Puff was a large sculpture made of wadding and fabric on a wooden frame with found objects secreted within. The work was intended as a sculptural instrument that had only one possible performance that could be played on it.*

photo: author

### **Décor Nuggets, 2001**

A travelling box for finger percussion by Rosemary Joy performed at Club Zho, Perth by Vanessa Tomlinson.

*A box of compartments filled with colourful and diverse sound sources for finger percussion using materials including fabric, plastic, beads, astroturf, wool and 'décor nuggets' (decorative stones).*

photo: author



### **Veronique, 2001**

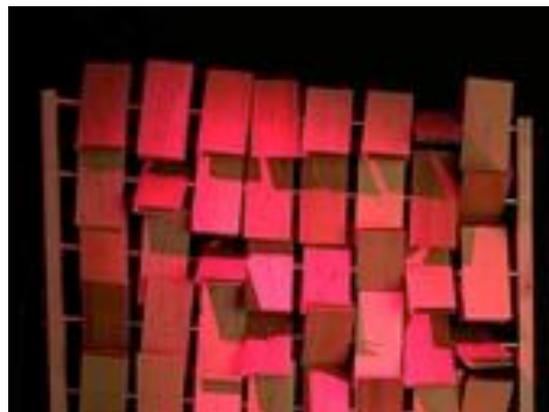
A percussive ball gown developed for and performed by Vanessa Tomlinson in 2001 at a Musica Viva concert and in 2002 at M on the Bund, Shanghai International Arts Festival and at the Sydney Opera House for the Sydney Spring Festival.

*A handmade silk ball gown resting over a wooden frame covered in wadding and hiding a range of sound sources including wood blocks and found objects such as plastic, a shower head and tin cans. The work was played by the hands and with hammers.*

photo: author

### ***Fabric Machine, 2002***

Large-scale percussive toy created by Rosemary Joy and explored during a creative development with Clocked Out Productions (Vanessa Tomlinson and Erik Griswold) *Measuring 2 x 1.5 metres, the work featured rows of rotating slats of wood that were designed to hit each other and ricochet up and down the sculpture however, structural problems meant that they did not move as intended and the large scale meant that only cheaper (and thus in this case, not interesting sounding) materials could be used. The frustrations of the large scale and engineering difficulties of this project led to return to the exploration of the miniature in *Décor Nuggets*.*



*photo: Yakzek*



### ***Field Kits, 2003***

Sculptural percussion project created by Rosemary Joy for the Playing Fields Percussion quartet. Developed during a month long residency at Linden St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Art for Aphids *Instrument Building* project.

*The Field Kits were personalised percussive kits featuring the favourite sounds of the percussionists that would play them including a miniature Foley kit for Peter Humble, a miniature workbench for Graeme Leak, a dental kit for David Hewitt and a travel kit for Vanessa Tomlinson containing rain-like sounds. This was the first project in which I experimented with the audience sitting on the other side of a table as at a dinner party with the musicians. Over two days of rehearsals, the musicians developed a ten-minute performance on the kits, which was seen by groups of eight people at a time. These kits were the forerunner to the Yakumo Honjin boxes.*

*photos: David Greenberg*



***The Hauser House, 2006***

A Swiss Radio commission for a percussive sculpture by Rosemary Joy inspired by Fritz Hauser's house in a converted barn in the hills near Milan. The sculpture was performed by Mr Hauser as part of the soundtrack for a radio broadcast of Samuel Beckett's *Worstward Ho*

**Collaborations**

***Ricefields, 1998***

Collaboration by Rosemary Joy, Sarah Pirrie and David Young. Installation/performance for soprano, recorders, violin/viola, percussion & electronics. First performed September 1998 by Aphids, La Mama Theatre, Melbourne; subsequently toured to France, Japan and Australia.

photo: Yakzek



***Scale, 2004***

Collaboration by Rosemary Joy, Cynthia Troup and David Young for sculptural percussion, toy piano, guitar and voice. Inspired by Bains:Connective, a former art deco swimming pool in Brussels where the work was created. First performed July 2004 by Fedor Teunisse, Yutaka Oya & Tom Pauwels Bains::Connective. *For this project, I created 6 percussive sculptures inspired by the venue's architecture and by percussionist Fedor Teunisse's favourite sounds which were created by one object moving over another object. Scale was later released on a CD.*

photo: David Young

### ***Oribotics [Laboratory], 2005***

Matt Gardiner's robotic origami installation for solo percussion & electronics, sculptural percussion by Rosemary Joy, performed by Eugene Ughetti, sound design by Jethro Woodward, composition by David Young. Presented November 2006 by Aphids in association with Asialink, Sidney Myer Asia Centre, University of Melbourne.

photo: Yatzek



### ***Schallmaschine 06, 2006***

Collaboration by Fritz Hauser & Boa Baumann (Switzerland), Speak Percussion, Rosemary Joy & David Young (Aphids)  
Premiered October 2006, Melbourne International Arts Festival. *Performed in three hidden chambers underneath Federation Square in front of 3 people at a time. The percussive sculptures were inspired by the spaces and by ideas contributed by the musicians during a consultation about their favourite sounds. Eugene Ughetti developed the idea of a treasure chest with a harp hidden in the lid in which I placed tiny drums, Chinese balls; John Arcaro's sculpture was inspired by his favourite sound – his children playing in the bath and by the elaborate configuration of the air-conditioning Labyrinth in which he performed.*

### ***Schallmaschine 07: Klein, 2007***

Architecture and sculptural percussion collaboration with Fritz Hauser & Boa Baumann (Switzerland), Rosemary Joy (percussive sculpture) & David Young (composition). Performed at Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland as part of the Different Beat Festival, a retrospective of Fritz Hauser's work, January 2007. *Both the sculpture and score were inspired by the three storey scaffolding structure of Schallmaschine: Gross within which the Klein performances took place over several days before an audience of three people at a time by soloists Steven Schick, Bob Becker, Fritz Hauser, Eugene Ughetti, Evaristo Aguilar and Timothy Constable.*

photo: Beat Presser



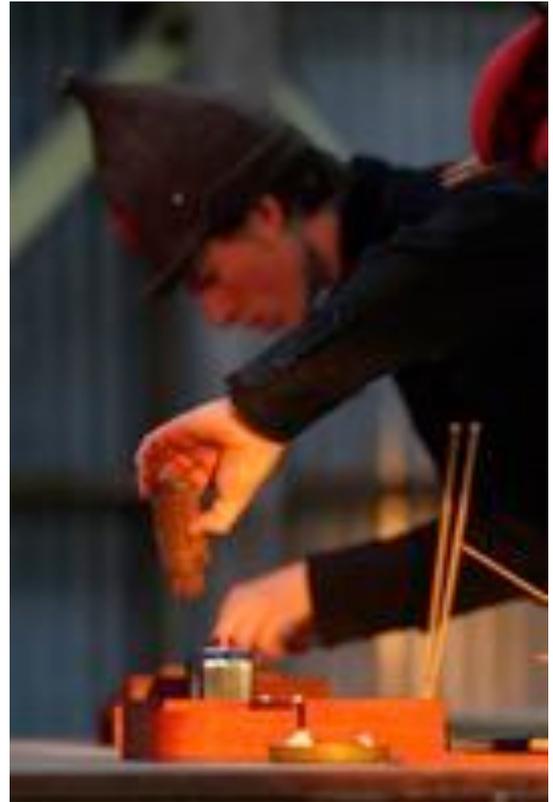
### ***Underground 2007***

Sculptural percussion by Rosemary Joy, music by David Young. First performed by Eugene Ughetti and Matthias Schack-Arnott for Aphids project *Music at Mt Egerton*, May 2007.

Later performances 2007-11:

Film Huis den Haag; Concertgebouw, Belgium; Museum de Pont, Tilburg, Netherlands performed by Slagwerkgroep den Haag; Espacio Cultural Metropolitano, Galería de Exposiciones Temporales (Tampico, Mexico) performed by Evaristo Aguilar and Daniel Saur as part of the Foro Internacional de Educación Musical de Tampico; Yakumo Honjin, Shinji, Shimane, Japan performed by Eugene Ughetti; Bains::Connective, Brussels performed by Annabelle Brown; Live Works, Performance Space, Carriageworks Sydney performed by John Arcaro and Matthias Schack-Arnott.

photo: Yatzek



### ***Gauge, 2012 & 2015***

Collaborating artist on interacting sound installation about water with five artists and two scientists including Madeleine Flynn, Tim Humphrey, Cameron Robbins, Graeme Leak, Dr Michael Roderick and Dr Adrian Pearce. First presented at Meat Market, North Melbourne in 2012. Later presented at the Brighton Festival, UK in 2015.

photo: author