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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Collecting and Aggregation as Musical Practice:
Two Examples from My Recent Work

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Joseph A. Bourdeau II

Committee in charge:

Professor Michelle Lou, Co-Chair
Professor Wilfrido Terrazas, Co-Chair
Professor Amy Alexander
Professor Tom Erbe

2024

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University of California San Diego

2024

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father Joseph Bourdeau

He was much more creative than most people ever got to see

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

Bourdeau_dissertation_samples.zip

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OBS Open Broadcast Software; a freeware streaming and live video software

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Collecting and Aggregation as Musical Practice:
Two Examples from My Recent Work

by

Joseph, A. Bourdeau II

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Michelle Lou, Co-Chair
Professor Wilfrido Terrazas, Co-Chair

This dissertation will analyze the ways in which personality, personal history, and subjective experience are explored through the collection and simultaneous arrangement of independent materials in two of my recent artistic projects. In my work as *Porpitid* the concept of collection is explored in the context of a sampling/mashup practice based largely around discarded and secondhand physical media. Through bringing together a number of independent video and audio sources as a basis for improvisation, this practice seeks to use an anachronistic assortment of culturally peripheral materials to probe the nature of American consumer media. This practice deals with processes of material collection and organization in a number of ways which are quite direct, and will be explored in Chapters One, through Four.

Chapters Five and Six focus on *This Way Forever*, a notated electroacoustic chamber work composed for in^set (David Aguila, Teresa Díaz, and Ilana Waniuk) in 2023. This work is in many ways an exploration of how performer-selected materials can be brought together in a pre-composed framework to create a piece which celebrates its existence as a combination of distinct personalities. Performers are invited to provide text, musical samples, and theatrical actions which insert themselves in a number of ways over the course of performing the piece. Throughout, the players focus on speaking, playing percussion, and physical actions more often than playing their primary instruments, with the goal being to showcase the tremendous flexibility of the performers, as well as the ways in which their approaches to these kinds of situations may differ. In this context the idea of collection serves to allow the performers a way into the piece, where they can provide a collection of materials (original and otherwise) which represents their conceptions of themselves, their instruments, and each other. In presenting these collections together simultaneously, the work aims to explore the complex series of interactions

and ideas which underly a given ensemble's practice in a chaotic, abstracted way.

Through the discussion of my practice as *Porpidid*, as well as analysis of *This Way Forever*; I hope to examine ways in which the formation of personal corpuses of material, and the navigation of complex media environments have been fruitful grounds for my recent artistic exploration, while also suggesting ways in which these ideas may be expanded going forward.

1. OVERVIEW OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE AS *PORPITID*

In *Postproduction*, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud, whose ideas will be discussed several times in this overview, describes a flea market as “a temporary and nomadic gathering of precarious materials and products of various provenances”, which are governed by the practice of recycling and the aesthetics of chaos.¹ This quote is in many ways descriptive of the atmosphere I hope to cultivate in my practice as *Porpitid*, where live audio samples are often collected together wholesale into a new environment along with pre-recorded video files and arranged into dense simultaneous verticalities. In these chaotic situations multiple streams of audio and video are often comprehensible at once, creating a practice centered around exploring interactions between intelligible sources.

These kinds of samples are what music historian David Metzger refers to as “interlopers that stand out in the mix, creating a constant give and take between the associations of the original source, and those of the new surroundings.”² By keeping materials together and juxtaposing them vertically, rather than linearly I am able to maintain each source’s intelligibility to a degree, thus accessing its connotations, while also defamiliarizing the material with the presence of other surrounding sources. This practice can create surprising associations, and lead to new perspectives on familiar materials or tropes, through the sort of “simultaneous side-by-side” viewing one might do of a collection.

Bourriaud invokes the media term “postproduction” to describe this sort of work, where artists “interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural

¹ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p.28

² Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning*, pp.160-170

products.”³ Bourriaud describes these artists as “semionauts”, cutting individual paths through shared cultural landscapes in a variety of ways, forming a practice based in navigating the signs and images of those spaces.⁴ This is similar to what Paul Miller (DJ Spooky) describes as interrogating a “communal response to collective consciousness” through music made of familiar samples.⁵ Fittingly Bourriaud includes DJs and “web surfers” as examples of such “semionauts”, and points out that these groups, along with “postproduction artists” are concerned with “imagining the links, the likely relations between disparate sites.”⁶

Many of the materials I have “linked together” in my practice as *Porpitid* are physical media objects like DVDs, vinyl records and VHS tapes, which would constitute examples of what music critic Simon Reynolds calls “The Dejection.”⁷ This “dejection” represents a collection of records (but Straw includes materials like books as well⁸) which are not popular enough to be used often, or purchased, but are also not thrown out, accumulating in attics and secondhand retailers of various kinds for long periods of time. These materials represent a special subset of cultural production, as materials which have, for some reason or another been deemed (almost) valueless. Straw further notes that the “endless revalorization of the Anglo-

³ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p.13

⁴ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p.18

⁵ Iyer and Miller, *Improvising Digital Culture*, p.3

⁶ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p.18

⁷ Reynolds, *Retromania*, p.105

⁸ Straw, *Exhausted Commodities*, p.2

American canon”, in the popular sphere has driven some artists towards these more forgotten musical edges in search of inspiration.⁹

This pool of “dejected” materials can be surprisingly disparate, with familiar mass-produced artifacts existing alongside more obscure materials of narrower distribution. Many of the audio materials to be found are examples of outdated music trends on CDs and vinyl, but other kinds of material, from classroom exercises to collections of poetry, and sound-effect records can also be found rather cheaply. In terms of “dejected” video materials there are dollar bin DVDs of yoga routines and old reruns, but occasionally VHS tapes are also available. These are often of films but are sometimes homemade tapes instead, containing news, television, etc. These materials, when taken as a collection, provide not a clear sense of a certain time, but rather an anachronistic smattering of “recent pasts”, which all represent (sometimes fading) aspects of a shared cultural whole. It is this fact which attracts me to this environment, as juxtaposing these materials on the edge of commercial exchange (and perhaps public consciousness) can allow for strange alignments which may have surprising associations or relevance to us in the present.

In *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer discuss the fact that mass commodification of experience has led to a situation where “life is to be made indistinguishable from the sound film.”¹⁰ This idea is picked up in Guy Debord’s 1967 book *The Society of the Spectacle*, which focusses on the idea that a manufactured worldview curated by “mass-media technologies” has caused life to be a mere

⁹ Straw, *Exhausted Commodities*, p.4

¹⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry*, p.99

reflection of itself.¹¹ The first of Debord's two hundred and twenty one points is that "In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a world of signs."¹² Taken this way any cultural product one could consume would likely represent a communication of life into a form of propagandized image. In viewing materials from the recent past, some of these signs which have begun to fall away seem more apparent from our point of view, but perhaps through simultaneous juxtaposition of a variety of familiar and unfamiliar signs, unexpected connections can arise. In making these comparisons my view is not purely critical of these materials or purely nostalgic, but rather aims to present an anachronistic smattering of dated and contemporary materials and worldviews simultaneously, painting a familiar but uncanny portrait of a cultural landscape.

Performance Setup and the Character of *Porpitid*

My practice as *Porpitid* in many ways celebrates what I see as my "natural" function as a point around which materials which are almost, but not quite garbage can accumulate and find purpose. Because of this, the character of a collector reveling in a pile of deteriorating salvaged materials is central to the presentation of the work on a number of levels. In his 2011 book *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction To Its Own Past*, Simon Reynolds relays the story of a college friend, who collected records in a "random" way, which Reynolds describes as "Like those huge bottom-trawling nets used in modern-day deep-sea fishing. ...[dredging] up all kinds

¹¹ Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, p.7-9 (see especially points two, five, and six)

¹² Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, p.7 (emphasis in original)

of lesser musical matter, and the gems were embedded amid mounds of barely listenable tat and piffle...”¹³ Reynolds describes this friend as living in a chaotic space, where unsleeved and warped records accumulated in piles, which were hastily and unceremoniously gifted away suddenly when the friend moved. This story calls to my own mind my father’s workspaces in our childhood garage, which seemed horrendously disorganized, but within which he could account for and describe each odd bit of material. Certainly in the latter space, “gems” were seldom rigorously separated from “tat and piffle”, with the two often accumulating together.

These kinds of spaces, which can imply a broad, chaotic, and living relationship with materials are something which resonate with me both personally and artistically, and which I wish to portray in live performance through curation of both the materials used, and the performance space. The use of an anachronistic collection of items gives the practice a sense of “history” which is lived and personal, while the use of hardware materials also allows me to access the physicality I have developed as a percussionist.

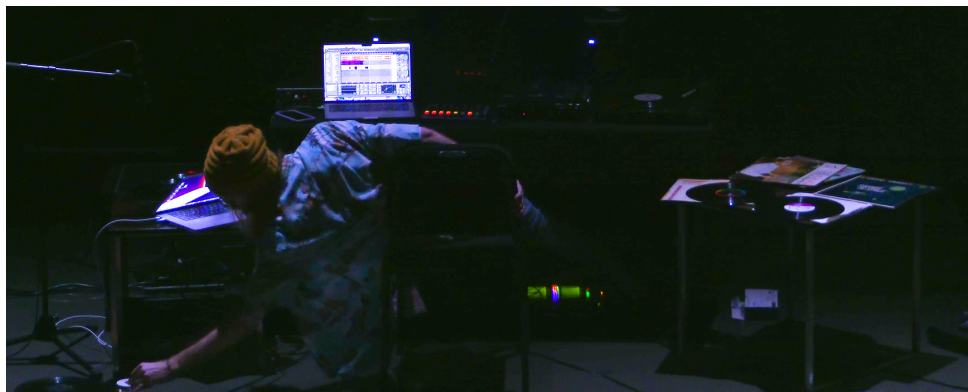


Figure 1.1: Still image from *i don't remember falling asleep*, (taken at UC San Diego, Conrad Prebys Music Center, Nov.3.2023) showing vinyl records accumulating in messy piles over the course of a performance.

¹³ Reynolds, *Retromania*, pp.97-99



Figure 1.2: Two still pre-show images from *i don't remember falling asleep*, demonstrating the assortment of screens used for video presentation.

The use of this large, anachronistic patchwork of equipment to process and manage dense streams of media from a variety of sources is where the name *Porpitiid* comes from. The term refers to a family of small, free-floating colonial organisms, in which many tiny creatures with limited functionality as individuals work together to create a predatory form.¹⁴ In a manner somewhat reminiscent of this animal's hydra-like qualities, this practice brings various fully-formed audio sources together as one unusual, but functional organism. The many tentacles of *Porpita porpita* are a fitting analogue for the many streams of audio and video which come together in this practice, as well as perhaps for the performance practice itself, where my attention and physicality are highly divided between several areas at once. Visually, the concept of a “central attachment disk”, which serves as a point of convergence for these multiple tentacles is in some ways conceptually and visually similar to my role as an organizer of sampled

¹⁴ See Texas Wildlife Department, Blue button, *Porpita porpita*
<https://txmarspecies.tamug.edu/invertdetails.cfm?scinameID=Porpita%20porpita>

materials in performance, and *figure 1.4* below demonstrates how this concept is visually apparent in the performance setup.

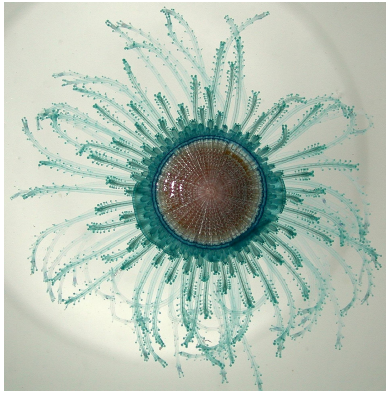


Figure 1.3: The Blue Button (*P. porpita*), a well-known porpitiid. Photograph by Bruce Moravchik (NOAA)



Figure 1.4: Overhead view of *i don't remember falling asleep*. This shot shows the “central control station” from which I visibly control the audiovisual materials in live situation

Part of the appeal of bulky and dated electronics is in the fact that they emphasize the almost monolithic nature of media materials surrounding us. In the 2008 article *Where did the computer go?* Dragan Espenschied discusses an ongoing trend in home computing where machines become increasingly formless and invisible.¹⁵ Espenschied criticizes this idea conceptually, pointing out that in a number of cases the amount or complexity of physical

¹⁵ Espenschied, *Where did the computer go?*, in *Digital Folklore*, pp.51-55

components is not decreased, but rather their size is decreased, or these components are simply hidden away from the user. This is seen as desirable because, as Espenschied claims, consumers would prefer the illusion that the computer is a magic technology that “runs on numbers” rather than the reality that it is a machine with physical components. My practices as *Porpitid* to some extent resists this tendency, embracing bulky, cumbersome and outdated technologies like CRTVs and hardware video processors as a way to both emphasize the overwhelming nature of media accumulation, and accommodate a more physical or tactile approach.

In staging a typical *Porpitid* performance, I often face away from the audience, giving the impression that my concern is elsewhere, and creating a false impression of non-performance. This impression again works to reinforce the image of a collector, whose attention is more on their materials and their work than on the audience (even if in a literal sense this is untrue). In the context of streaming performances, a similar affect is created through the use of overhead cameras. This kind of staging centers my focus on the physical music objects at work in the practice, and again demonstrates the extent to which this practice is concerned with the act of “rummaging through” and navigating spaces which are physically and referentially cluttered.



Figure 1.5: Still frame from a live-streamed performance demonstrating the use of overhead camera angles.

The use of synchronicity and improvisation in my practice as *Porpitid*

A living process of engagement with materials from the past and present is central to this practice, and my work as an improviser, both on large and short timescales is essential in exploring this idea. In *Improvising Tomorrow's Bodies: The Politics of Transduction*, imminent musician, and scholar George Lewis comments that “My practice as an improvising musician has taught me that although all art must involve improvisation, improvisation itself moves beyond the purview of both art and craft.”¹⁶ This view is echoed by Higgins and Mantie, who speaking from a music education perspective argue for the significance of improvisation as an experience, or “a distinctive way of being in and through music that reflects the fact that the act of living is largely improvisatory.”¹⁷ These comments highlight the role of improvisation in moment to moment decision-making, as well as the ways that these moments add up to approaches and “ways of being” in the world. The parallels between lived experience, artistic approach, and materiality are central to both my practice as *Porpitid*, and the work discussed in Chapters Five and Six, *This Way Forever*.

With the above ideas about improvisation as an effective mode of interacting with the world in mind,¹⁸ my practice as *Porpitid* aims to keep a flexible approach, which is informed heavily by my work as an improviser. For most performances, the general structure of a show is predetermined, and the duration fixed through the creation of a fixed media track. This fixed element usually contains three streams of prerecorded video, and a prerecorded track of stereo

¹⁶ Lewis, *Improvising Tomorrow's Bodies*

¹⁷ Higgins and Mantie, *Improvisation as Ability*, p.1

¹⁸ Vijay Iyer goes so far as to say that “Improvisation should be regarded as identical to what we call experience.” (Iyer and Miller, *Improvising Digital Culture*)

audio. In performance, these pre-recorded materials act as an accompaniment for live improvisation using hardware media and radio, with my typical setup containing two vinyl record players, an AM/FM radio, and digital streaming radio via radio.garden.¹⁹

Some of the records and radio stations to be used in a given performance are predetermined while others are not, and within the pre-determined framework there are various degrees of fixity at the local level. Sometimes these tracks are combined freely, and without precise synchronization, while in more general cases albums may be preselected, but specific tracks left indeterminate until the moment of performance. Still other materials may be relatively fixed, serving more as traditional remixes or edits of audio and video samples. In all, the performance approach taken in my work as *Porpitid* is best described as a fixed framework, within which moment-to-moment actions and synchronicities are often more spontaneous. In this way the practice is flexible and process-oriented, being based around the use of both predetermined and spontaneous inclusions of audiovisual materials to create alignments which are unique to each iteration of the practice.

This sort of approach, which relies on indeterminacy in the alignments of various tracks of prerecorded material has been used by a number of other composers including Maria Chavez²⁰ and Christian Marclay, both of whom work with chance and synchronicity through the medium of live vinyl. This practice could also be loosely connected to John Cage's work in mixing the eight mono tracks of *Williams Mix* (1952), in which the composer avoided using multitrack

¹⁹ An Amsterdam based collective which curates an internet portal providing free access to global streaming radio. See <http://radio.garden/settings/radio-garden>

²⁰ See "The Language of Chance #1" and "La Fabrique Agitée aux Instants Chavirés - 17/01/2019"

machines, “Because that would give *one* fixed relation to separate tracks.”²¹ In *Williams Mix* there are pre-performance indeterminacies in the selection of particular sound samples, as well as the indeterminacy which arises from Cage’s playback configuration of multiple, loosely synchronized tapes. This is quite different in approach from performers like Chavez, Marclay, and myself, for whom live, human intervention and physicality is an integral part of the performance.

Marclay discusses his manipulations and preparations of records as a way to make the passive process of consumption more active, and to “give life” to music which has been tied to decaying objects.²² This approach perhaps attempts to fight against the passive consumption which Adorno and Horkheimer were so critical of in *The Culture Industry*. This line of thought appeals to me as well, and many of the techniques Marclay uses are familiar to my practice. Where my work differs from Marclay’s and indeed much sampling work is a decreased reliance on fragmentation of the source materials.

As mentioned above, my sampling practice is often heavily quotation-based, with recognizable materials playing out in longer segments. This kind of sampling is occasionally present in Marclay’s work also, as the Roulette TV performance linked below shows.²³ In my music, however, dense layers of contiguous audiovisual material are taken as more of a “default behavior”, and there is a strong focus on parallel polyphony which is not manufactured through loops or preparations, but which is allowed to arise from interactions between the sampled

²¹ Kostelanetz, *A Conversation About Radio*, p.224

²² Legere, *Christian Marclay*, <https://vimeo.com/11113671>

²³ See footnote 22

materials. French composer Luc Ferrari's 1969 installation work, *Music Promenade* takes an approach more similar to this aesthetically, but again removes the component of live human performance.²⁴ This work was premiered as an installation, with four tracks of tape looping simultaneously to create an indeterminate environment which rotates through a fixed collection of possible alignments.²⁵ This sort of approach is perceptually much more similar to my work than Cage's, but the removal of a live performer proves again a crucial difference.

Parallels also exist between the aesthetic of this practice, and the work of composers like Charles Ives and Luciano Berio in the 20th Century. These composers also used simultaneous deployments of semi-synchronous materials, which made heavy use of musical and textual quotation, but in a strictly notated environment. These techniques can be seen in many of Ives' works, including, *Central Park in the Dark*, and, *Symphony No.4*, which quotes from a broad range of American musical styles. The famous third movement of Berio's 1968, *Sinfonia*, features an overlapping series of textual and musical quotations over a framework of Mahler's second symphony. These kinds of works show a reflection on the cultural environments of the composers through the compiling and simultaneous juxtaposition of quoted materials. Although these composers' works are strictly notated and for instrumental performers, the more eclectic, chaotic nature of their music is aesthetically similar to my approach at times.

These (by no means extensive) comparisons to other sampling and quotation artists begin to show where my work fits into a larger body of related practices concerning these ideas. In many ways the relative lack of fragmentation in my work sets it apart from other sampling

²⁴ See <http://lucferrari.com/en/analyses-reflexion/music-promenade/> for a recording and the artists notes about this work

²⁵ Ferrari, *Music Promenade*, <http://lucferrari.com/en/analyses-reflexion/music-promenade/>

practices, while the focus on improvisation, collecting, and physical media set this work apart from the work of many WAM composers. The “in-betweenness” of this practice may stem from a tendency to merge performative and compositional thinking in my work, a fact which echoes comments by Vijay Iyer regarding the false binary between composition and improvisation.²⁶

The Role of Prefabricated Video in my Practice as Porpitid

This blend in approaches is taken to various degrees at different times in my practice as *Porpitid*. As mentioned above, a typical performance set is structured around prerecorded audio/video tracks, which are used to help pace the performance, and serve as a template over which to improvise. These pre-recordings are often quite varied, both in terms of audio and video, and prerecorded materials of both kinds can serve foreground and background functions at various points in a given performance. Although these materials are “pre-composed” many of them, especially those rooted in audio or video feedback processes, are themselves improvisations which have been processed and rendered as fixed tracks.

While audio feedback is used in my work as *Porpitid*, and will be discussed in the following chapter in regards to a specific performance set, video feedback serves as a much more consistent and idiomatic element of this practice. Many of these video feedback materials were generated on standard definition VFX units and video mixers like the SIMA SFX-10 (2007), and the Roland LVS-400 (2004). The use of these, and similar hardware units, along with processing in OBS on my laptop allows me to take a tactile, improvisatory approach to creating psychedelic, color-saturated effects which (perhaps paradoxically) carry a grainy or decaying quality. These

²⁶ Iyer and Miller, *Improvising Digital Culture*, p.8

feedback techniques are sometimes used to process sampled video, and sometimes used alone to generate abstract, self-sustaining processes, but in either case, a period of hardware-based improvisation, followed by post-processing is used to produce the final performance videos.

The role of video feedback in my practice as *Porpitid*

The contrast between the surreal nature of the feedback materials, and the often mundane aspects of the sampled video is a frequent point of interest in this practice, as are the ways in which the two kinds of material can blend and contextualize one another.

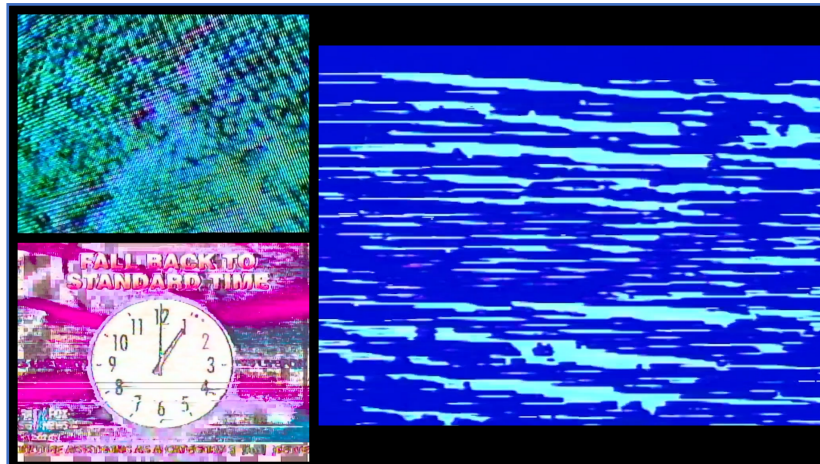


Figure 1.6: Still frame from *i don't remember falling asleep, III:dreamland*, showing feedback processing of a source image (left side) and abstract feedback generated with a camcorder, CRTV, and OBS running on a MacBook. (right side)

Though the artistic effect of these two kinds of processing can be quite different, in both cases the use of the dated video mixers and picture enhancers contributes an aged, distorted feel to the materials, giving a characteristic “low resolution” quality. This quality contributes a certain “haunted” essence to the material, where the colorful and alien nature of the materials contributes to an environment of surreal dysfunction.

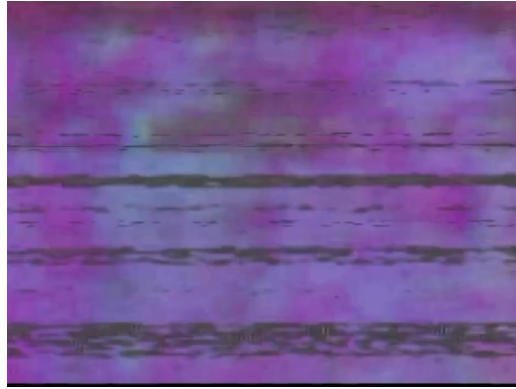


Figure 1.7: Still frame from *i don't remember falling asleep, III:dreamland*, showing how feedback processing on a noisy VHS signal can enhance artifacts and degrade signal

This decayed quality is often enhanced by the ways in which visual feedback exaggerates artifacts in the source material. The blue and cyan feedback shown on the right side of *Figure 1.6*, for example is seeded by banding which appears when filming this television display screen with my camcorder, and the feedback in *Figure 1.7* demonstrates how feedback is generated from audio-responsive visual noise in *i don't remember falling asleep (2023)*.

Adding to the “autonomous” quality of these materials is the fact that the video feedback is a reactive process, and can be coaxed into slowly evolving, cycling, or self-sustaining behaviors, which give the materials a periodic and semi-predictable “living” quality.²⁷ These sorts of behaviors both suggest and embody autonomy, even though the materials are obviously being constrained considerably by my actions and equipment. This evolving or “living” quality of feedback has been attractive to a number of video artists. Woody Vasulka, who, along with his partner Steina was an early proponent of video feedback discusses in a 1996 interview the possibility of “independent behavior” and “non-humanly imposed structuring” of materials that

²⁷ See sample video feedback_ball.mp4

video feedback can create.²⁸ This sort of semi-autonomy, where feedback behaviors arise from the particularities of the video processing and display equipment, as well the source video (if present) and my own artistic choices demonstrates an abstract and microcosmic version the complex sorts of interactions that concern my practice as *Porpitid*. These feedback practices also reflect the fact that the equipment used has its own “personality”, which contributes inexorably to the fabric of the work. This concept of “haunted electronics” also perhaps connects to the ideas discussed by Straw in regards to the “auras” which make old media difficult to treat as true rubbish.

A more general discussion of glitches and distortion in my practice as *Porpitid*

As discussed above, video feedback can have a tendency to enhance or proliferate visual artifacts, and my practice as *Porpitid* leans into distortions and imperfections, accepting them as part of the personality of the system. By enhancing or giving prominence to these qualities, I can create an environment which communicates a surreal and exaggerated sense of misfire and decay. In the context of audio, this aged and discarded atmosphere can be achieved through digital audio processes, or live manipulations of materials like vinyl and tape, as well as through the video feedback processes discussed above.

Artifacts and misfires are also often present in the equipment I use. Several of my television screens, for example are damaged, warping images a particular way, and one of my vinyl players has a dying motor, which causes records to play at a slower, and slightly varying speed. In regards to vinyl, the use of physical manipulations, and simple preparations can also be

²⁸ Davidson, *Woody Vasulka / Audio synthesis and feedback loops*

used to give the materials a warped, or uncanny sound, while additionally emphasizing musical qualities in a certain grotesque way. The physical manipulations of vinyl in my practice are much less refined than the scratching techniques employed by DJs, and rather than serving a rhythmic or beat-matching function, my manual manipulations of vinyl often slow or warble records, furthering a cartoonish sense of malfunction or decay.

In terms of more “autonomous” processes, one simple preparation involves sitting a 45 RPM record on a twelve inch platter off-center, allowing the record to play with a periodic pitch/speed “lag” as the needle takes paths of varying distance and speed around the off-centered record. This kind of simple “hands free” preparation signals a sort of haphazard, unattended quality in performance, while also freeing me up physically to attend to other concerns. In some ways, this sort of approach is similar to the work of Pierre Bastien, a French musician who often performs alongside automated instruments run by turntable motors.²⁹

This kind of work with vinyl also begs comparison to Christian Marclay, whose early work with altering and improvising with records first began in the late 1970s. Marclay’s 1989 album *More Encores* opens with a waltz playing on vinyl, with the pitch/speed being manipulated in various extreme ways. The idiomatic sounds of vinyl skipping, and being accelerated ahead are used to rather humorous effect throughout the track. Marclay’s approach to sampling is often (but not always) more heavily fragmented than my own, however and his use of “prepared” records has more in common with tape splicing than the warbling or slowing effect my preparations tend to produce. The textures Marclay creates are also quite dense with sampled

²⁹ Wyse, *Pierre Bastien*; See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZqzdI5o2BY> for a demonstration of automated processes run by a turntable motor.

fragments and referential to the sound of vinyl itself, but Marclay's performance practice is much more physical and active than my own, a fact which comes across in the more fragmented, constantly shifting nature of the music compared to my frequent use of longer samples to create an environment where materials often "drift in and out" of a texture. Nevertheless, Marclay's concerns regarding "getting involved" in the process of consumption, and generally tactile approach to working with physical media are in many ways analogous to my practice as *Porpitid*.

In addition to tactile manipulations of materials like vinyl, I am also able to process live audio with a variety of simple digital effects in Ableton Live. A major part of the live practice of *Porpitid* is crafting an interesting and comprehensible mix from the various incoming streams of audio. In order to do this I bring each audio source (vinyl, radio etc.) into my computer via an interface, with each sound source getting its own track in Ableton Live. Using a simple knob and fader-based MIDI surface, I am able to control the volume, pan, and reverb of each track individually. In addition to this, each track can be processed with one predetermined "glitch" effect. This effect is often unique to each track, and features simple processing like distortion effects, pitch shifters, or various Ableton Live plugins like the "beat repeat", which can create a sort of rhythmic resampling akin to the skipping of a CD. These "glitch" effects allow me to distort the audio in ways which again communicate an exaggeratedly dated or deteriorating quality.

This quality is important to my work, as it helps exaggerate not only the use of an anachronistic and deteriorating set of materials, but can also defamiliarize these materials without destroying their intelligibility. This exaggeration of decay can cast an unsettling or

humorous light on sampled materials, perhaps prompting different angles of reflection upon familiar signs. To some extent this practice shares aesthetic approaches with many musics rooted in the concept of nostalgia, like the work of Daniel Lopatin (as Chuck Person and Oneohtrix Point Never) and the ever proliferating flurry of “vaporwave-like” genres. Lopatin’s 2010 album *Chuck Person’s Eccojams Vol.1*, serves as an early archetype for this kind of material, featuring slowed and distorted, glitched and looped remixes of popular songs from the late 1980s and early 1990s to a fuzzy, dreamlike effect. More recently, web-based artists like Robin Burnett (known online as The Internet Club, as well as a dizzying number of other pseudonyms) have created works sometimes dubbed “signalwave”,³⁰ where artists create their own surreal approximations of vintage television landscapes, saturated with noisy, pitch-shifted distortion. The Internet Club’s 2011 release *Deluxe* contains a number of short tracks like “FOREVER” and “Dew Warning”, which use slowed, warped and distorted samples of television advertisements to create a surreal environment saturated with 1980s nostalgia.³¹ The work of artists like Lopatin and The Internet Club have been variously interpreted as critiques on capitalist consumerism, and genuine expressions of nostalgia, with the truth likely existing in the middle ground to some extent.³²

In my work too, there is something in between a fondness for the process of physically rifling through materials from the past, and a sort of associated uneasiness with the materials

³⁰ Moore, *TV2 Talks Signalwave*, <https://soundbleed.org.nz/SIGNALWAVE>

³¹ *Deluxe* album hosted on bancamp.com <https://internetclub.bandcamp.com/album/deluxe>

³² See Adam Harper’s 2012 article *Vaporwave and the pop-art of the virtual plaza* (<https://dmy.co/news/adam-harper-vaporwave>) as well as Sidney Franklin’s 2024 article *The Genre That Melted Into Air: Vaporwave’s Unstable Ideology and the Politics of Art in the Digital Age*, which challenges Harper’s conclusions (<https://texturemag.net/the-genre-that-melted-into-air-vaporwaves-unstable-ideology-and-the-politics-of-art-in-the-digital-age/>)

accumulated. Rather than presenting materials of a certain “aesthetic”, or from a certain time period, my work presents an anachronistic smattering of decaying pasts, which all provide snapshots of a particular time. Emphasizing and exaggerating the aged and deteriorating nature of this collection emphasizes the impermanence and instability of these materials in a rather direct way. This emphasis on deterioration perhaps implies the instability of ideas which we recognize as dated, but on another level the fact that these objects (and in many cases their associated ideas) persist in some form or another points an uncomfortable mirror back at our present. As Straw notes, the accumulation of dejected cultural materials in secondhand stores at once creates a “museum of failure”, and in doing so serves also as a sort of monument to these materials.³³ Dealing with the contradictions that arise in these sorts of environments often lends itself to a humorous approach, and the use of humor to engage with these materials in my practice as *Porpitid* will be the focus of the next section.

Humor and Contradiction in My Practice as *Porpitid*

In *Rubbish Theory*, Michael Thompson notes that “The joke, the paradox, the shock technique, and the journalistic style, far from being unscholarly devices to be avoided at all costs, become rubbish theory’s inseparable accompaniments.”³⁴ This comment is fitting given the interest in contradictions which prevails throughout *Rubbish Theory*, with Thompson discussing often the contextual nature of rubbish, and the conflicting worldviews which interact in a given

³³ Straw, *Exhausted Commodities*, p.3

³⁴ Thompson, *Rubbish Theory*, p.5

society.³⁵ For Thompson, the exploration of contradictions and opposing views allows one to examine the gaps in a given cognitive framework by examining the fuzzy, contextual boundaries separating what is rubbish from what is not.³⁶ A focus on contradictions, and especially contradictory worldviews is also prevalent in my work, and materials are often selected to highlight contradictory sources, motivations, or emotional states. This focus on contradictory or contrasting materials makes a humorous approach effective in highlighting the accumulation of contradictory worldviews or “frames” at play in any given cultural moment.

In *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach*, Rod A. Martin discusses how incongruity and contradiction, along with a sense of playfulness are central to many theories of humor. He quotes evolutionary theorists Matthew Gervais and David Wilson, who describe these conditions succinctly as "nonserious social incongruity."³⁷ This sense of playful incongruity is common in my practice, and approaching this practice with a sense of humor represents both a conscious artistic decision, and another link between my larger approach to life, and the approaches taken in this work.

Explaining exactly what one means by a sense of humor can be surprisingly complicated. In *Psychology of Humor*, Martin states that a sense of humor is “best conceived as a group of traits and abilities having to do with different components, forms, and functions of humor.”³⁸ He elaborates that a sense of humor can be...

³⁵ Thompson, *Rubbish Theory*, pp.77-102

³⁶ Thompson, *Rubbish Theory*, pp.77-102

³⁷ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, p.6

³⁸ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, p.195

variously conceptualized as a habitual behavior pattern (tendency to laugh frequently, to tell jokes and amuse others with spontaneous witticisms, to laugh at other people's humor productions), an ability (to create humor, to amuse others, to "get the joke," to remember jokes), a temperament trait (habitual cheerfulness, playfulness), an aesthetic response (enjoyment of particular types of humorous material), an attitude (positive attitude toward humor and humorous people), a world view (bemused, nonserious outlook on life), or a coping strategy or defense mechanism (tendency to maintain a humorous perspective in the face of adversity)."³⁹

Many of these conceptions of a "sense of humor" are applicable in my work, particularly in terms of the "world view" and "coping strategy" senses which Martin points out. In many ways I see these senses as supporting one another, and taking a humorous approach to the contradictions and strange incongruities which surround us in modern media culture certainly helps many people to cope with the overstimulation and over commodification of this environment.

One theory of humor which is particularly relevant to this function, and to my work is British psychologist Michael Apter's concept of "synergies with diminishment." Apter uses the term "synergy" to describe a quality wherein an object or statement represents multiple, often contradictory ideas simultaneously.⁴⁰ Apter posits that much art has synergy in one form or another, and presents the rather straightforward example of a play, where a situation is both literally unfolding before viewers in "reality", while also acting as a representation of something else, and is accepted as both things at once. These synergies are quite common to a variety of situations, and not inherently humorous, although synergies are often a component of humorous situations. According to Apter's theories humorous situations feature a specific kind of synergy, in which one meaning is "diminished", or taken to be "less important, dignified, serious,

³⁹ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, p.194

⁴⁰ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, p.7

valuable, worthy of respect, etc., than what at first appeared.”⁴¹ This concept of diminishment is often at play in my work, especially given the highly referential qualities of many of the audiovisual materials, and the presence of musical products alongside “lesser” materials like advertisements and instructional videos.

The concept of diminishment explains well humor’s ability to recontextualize and criticize dominant modes of acting or thinking, as well as figures of authority etc. through the diminishment of certain cultural tropes or ideas. The inclusion of certain strange and discarded materials in my practice highlights aspects of our material media culture which are not always given special attention. Working with these materials in a way which highlights contradictory or humorous qualities can act as a diminishment of the media landscape, and by extension a diminishment of one’s experience of the cultural framework within which it exists. This practice again calls back to Bourriaud and DJ Spooky’s comments about the use of semiotics to probe cultural spaces, but with the understanding that in my work the effect of this exploration is often humorous. This kind of approach creates space for reflection on the shared delusion of society in a way which allows for discomfort, but which is ultimately nonthreatening.

In the context of flea markets and material collections, one can imagine that diminishment might explain why the experience of finding a poorly painted, two dollar frog lamp could be amusing to us. One could argue that the lamp diminishes both the concept of lamps, and frogs, as well as by extension nature and furniture in general. An object like this is very decidedly a product of our surroundings, but its existence also (perhaps in a way unintended by the maker) causes us to reflect humorously on the overall situation within which both we and

⁴¹ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, pp.99-100

that object must coexist. This interest is similar to what Jim Jupp of Belbury Poly describes in regards to low-budget European horror films as “their cheesiness, their bad effects and sound quality that often gives them an unworldly quality and indefinable otherness, beyond the director's intent.”⁴² In working with these materials, these “cheesy” or unintended qualities make the materials well suited to my practice’s focus on contradiction and humor, as well as materials drawn into surreal and “haunted” environments.

The concerns here are perhaps similar to the parodic tone of artists like Negativland, whose aesthetic often makes use of vintage advertisements and commercial programming. Their fourth album *Escape from Noise* begins with a caricature of a corporate introduction which frames the album as a commercial demo disk “analytically designed to break on radio”. The album continues as an extended parody of consumer culture and the corporate media landscape, juxtaposing sampled loops from well-known artists with original materials and vintage vocal samples.⁴³ This parody (as with much of my work) is often rather “on the nose” with one track *The Playboy Channel* telling the story of a man unable to enjoy his pornography due to a strange sound his television is making. The narration, delivered in a comedic, droning style unfolds over distorted, glitching loops, credited in the liner notes to Jimi Hendrix and Devo.⁴⁴ The narration displays a fixation with both media consumption, and hardware equipment, as well as continuing the album’s running theme of noisy intrusions. The album overall paints a grim but comedic portrait of American consumer culture, and generally provides an example of how humor can be

⁴² Reynolds, *HAUNTED AUDIO*

⁴³ Negativland, *Escape the Noise*, liner notes

⁴⁴ Negativland, *Escape the Noise* liner notes

used to criticize commercial modes of consumption, often showing both consumers and advertisers in a rather ridiculous light.

This humorous approach is attractive to me (and perhaps other artists) because of its ability to present uncomfortable ideas in a way which is not overtly threatening. Here the “nonserious” aspect of Gervais and Wilson’s definition above must be highlighted, and the inclusion of a humorous, or lighthearted tone in my work aids in keeping performances from becoming too emotionally “heavy” or sensorially overwhelming. The use of humor, allows for these heavier or more difficult moments to arise and pass in a way which is (relatively) harmless, without sapping them entirely of tension or uneasiness.

Returning the discussion to “a sense of humor”, Martin cites research by Cann and Calhoun, who found that when participants were asked to speculate on the personality traits that may accompany a good sense of humor in a hypothetical person, respondents mentioned traits like “friendly, pleasant, cooperative, interesting, imaginative, creative, clever, admirable, intelligent, and perceptive” than a hypothetical person with a “below average sense of humor.”⁴⁵ This response demonstrates the way in which humor functions in the context of my practice’s “personality.” By including humor in a situation which may be uncanny or uncomfortable, there can be a sense of playful softening, which helps to keep the experience overall from becoming too upsetting. In Chapters Three, Four, and Six we will examine specific instances of humor in several of my works, discussing in the process the ways in which humor is created, and its function in the artistic environment.

⁴⁵ Martin, *Psychology of Humor*, p.193

One consistent source of humorous juxtapositions in my practice generally is the use of the radio. The materials broadcast on the radio often represent a more “active” part of the commercial spectrum than the physical media objects I collect, and the juxtaposition between the quite overtly commercial materials of the radio, and the more dated, forgotten materials is a common source of friction and humor in my practice as *Porpitid*. The radio also represents a strong source of indeterminate elements in this practice, since these materials were collected by someone else for very specific commercial purposes before being accessed by me. As such the following discussion will explore not only the artistic role of the radio in my practice, but also the unique ways in which this particular source must be handled in a live performance set.

The Use of Radio in my Practice as *Porpitid*

A typical *Porpitid* performance involves the use of at least one AM/FM radio, as well as a stream of digital radio pulled from radio.garden. As mentioned above, the materials which appear on the radio are in many ways the exact *opposite* of the dejected materials like old DVDs and vinyl records, with the radio being directly reflective of a highly mainstream and active consumer market. Because of this, working with the radio allows for a more direct image of commercial culture by presenting the materials we hold up for continuous consumption. This is especially true in the case of FM radio, where many of the materials broadcast represent the most popular and commercially viable media for a given consumer body, as stations curate material with the aim of furnishing and retaining listeners in the pursuit of advertising revenue.

As such, FM bands are often dominated by popular music, with occasional news programs, and longer-form talk shows sprinkled throughout. The fact that these materials are

highly focussed on commodifying content is sonically stamped on the programming by advertisements, station bumpers, and various other kinds of interstitial content which mark the materials as consumer products funded by corporate ad revenue (or donations, as the Christian stations like to remind us). This makes the radio a source of friction against the more passive consumption of secondhand and discarded materials used in my work, and as such I tend to highlight highly commercial musics, and advertisements when sampling from FM radio. The effect of this friction can be at once humorous and jarring, especially in regards to the appearance of advertisements within more abstract or surreal audiovisual textures.

Although my work does often employ “fake glitches” as is common in the work of Negativland, and a number of other artists discussed in this paper,⁴⁶ this practice does not extend to fake advertisements or “character bits.” Although I may create edits or remixes of television ads in the pre-recorded video components, my practice of radio sampling is more wholesale and reliant on happenstance. Working in this way not only allows me to further explore improvised approaches, but also to emphasize the relationships that are already in place around me as an American consumer, rather than always manufacturing commentary on these relationships. In a sense, this kind of approach seeks to find humorous and surreal interactions between everyday materials without the humor always being prescriptive, or the result of parodic fictionalization. In this sense, my approach is quite different from groups like Negativland, although there are certainly still shared techniques and concerns.

⁴⁶ See Negativland’s “The Playboy Channel” from *Escape from Noise* (1986), and Lopatin’s “A2” from *Eccojams Vol.1* (2010)

The presence of advertisements, funding drives, sponsor announcements etc. in my work anchors it firmly within the modern American commercial landscape in ways which can be surprising or uncomfortable. In including these kinds of materials with direct, stated connections to the real world, however, one must take precautions to maintain the kind of relatively playful environment which I aim for in performances as *Porpitid*. In the case of live-sampling from the radio this becomes especially important, and one such precaution is a general avoidance of news stations, political programs, or discussions directly related to current events. There are several ethical reasons for this, with the foremost being that it is not my aim to exploit current tragedies for musical material, especially when these events could be upsetting for listeners. In 2024, American news and politically-oriented radio are quite likely to arouse in a listener genuine concerns for either their own well-being, or that of someone else, which is a state of mind that I don't want to put people into intentionally, or attempt to mine for artistic practice. Additionally, these materials provide quite a "direct" view of the world, while advertisements paint a somewhat more indirect picture. The indirect view (and often inherent humor) of advertisements is more artistically interesting to me as an abstraction of societal interactions, although news programming is unfortunately an equally strong example of "the spectacle" at work.

The distinction between news sources and other spoken materials is obviously not an exact science, and there are certainly inconsistencies in this practice. Environments made up of music and advertisements are not hermetic, and a listener could certainly be triggered emotionally by an advertisement or musical selection. In addition to this, the interstitial banter on many stations with live DJs often features references to the real world and the present day. These materials find their way into my practice largely because they are, by design, often rather light

and “low stakes”, being more akin to advertisements than news, and because they are rather difficult to avoid in live situations. These sorts of “interjections” are also a highly idiomatic aspect of radio as a medium, and for this reason I hope to not suppress them for the same reasons I often don’t “clean up” the noise in materials sampled from vinyl or tape. These inconsistencies, as with many things are a matter of degrees, and there is a subjective process of assessment that goes into deciding what materials are “too real” and to be avoided in this practice where possible.

It is important here to note that these sorts of avoidances must be made most aggressively when live-sampling. In situations where samples are pre-processed and organized it is possible to sample from news programs, or other kinds of material I would avoid on the radio in a more controlled way, which alleviates some of the above concerns. Being able to preview a VHS tape from 2005 and select a news story for inclusion in a performance is quite different than dialing to the news in 2024 and seeing what appears. One example of material which I would be unlikely to sample in a live situation, but commonly sample in prefabricated materials is commercial religious programming. These materials are attractive to me because the juxtaposition between a Christian spiritual message, and overtly commercial concerns is often humorous and unsettling in exactly the ways that interest me. These materials must be handled carefully, however, since religious, and particularly American Evangelical imagery can be upsetting to viewers for any number of reasons. The ability to prescreen materials and include them as pre-recorded elements allows me not only to carefully choose which materials to focus on, but also to ensure that appropriate content warnings are provided for a given performance or recording.

Content warnings are important to this work because my “pre-screening” process is imperfect, and relies heavily on my own estimations of what others may or may not find “too” upsetting. Because of this, I attempt to limit potentially troubling materials to the pre-recorded components, which allows me to be as specific as possible with these content warnings, and give audiences an accurate appraisal of what they can expect to see and hear in a given performance. Of course, the fact that the radio is included at all merits a content warning, since again there is no way to “hermetically seal” this live source, and doing so would remove some of its inherently attractive qualities.

The importance of content warnings in presentations of my work plays a role in another major aspect of my radio practice, which is a general avoidance of Spanish-language stations. The avoidance of these stations is due to a number of factors, largely stemming from the fact that I don’t speak Spanish, and that my only experience with these materials is as an ignorant observer. The only reason I feel comfortable tackling subject matter such as the American Christian evangelical materials mentioned above is because of my background as an American Christian, with firsthand experiences of these communities, and this kind of programming. Although I have extensive exposure to Spanish-language programming as a resident first of Florida, and now of California, my lack of facility with the language, and lack of lived experience of the Spanish-speaking communities in these places means that I am unable to screen materials according to the principles outlined above effectively at all, let alone in real time. This fact is problematic in terms of content-warnings, as outlined above, but also in terms of power dynamics in the piece, since my use of Spanish-language media would be governed by entirely different principles than my use of materials which I can readily understand, and have a

lived experience of.

In selecting a certain radio station playing American music, it is relatively likely that I will have some experience of the music, the artist, the genre to which it belongs etc. This experience may likely extend to an understanding of the cultural connotations of these materials in a wider sense. This cultural understanding of the materials present informs directly (and indirectly) what I am likely to select from the radio in performance. Furthermore, the implications generated between radio samples and the other surrounding materials often work on a number of levels, which rely on these tropes and cultural associations. The fact that I consume Spanish-language materials as an outsider with no ability to critically select for inclusions would mean that my selections of these materials cannot be informed by the same principles, as I am unaware of the implications that various genres, or eras of music being broadcast may carry. This discrepancy leads me to keep these materials from playing a central role in this practice, as any use of them would be more surface-level than my use of more familiar (to me) media. The aspects of humor and criticism at play in the practice also factor into my avoidance of Spanish-language media, as English-language radio materials are often treated as humorous, which may lead a listener to assume the same treatment for Spanish-language ads in situations where this is inappropriate. Moreover, I don't feel as if I'm positioned to criticize or poke fun at these materials in the same way which I am for English-language materials with which I am more culturally connected, and as such, I seek to avoid actions which would create the implication that I am doing so.

The avoidance of Spanish-language stations, however, does not translate to a complete avoidance of Spanish-language materials. According to radio-locator.com, which uses FCC data

to compile AM/FM station listings and coverage maps, nearly half of the stations broadcasting to the San Diego area are either Spanish-language programming, based in Mexico, or both.⁴⁷ This situation is complicated, since a number of the stations available from Tijuana broadcast American music and English-language programming, with the exception of certain station announcements etc. Conversely, there are a number of English-language stations broadcasting from California, which due to the high Spanish-speaking population in the area include ads or PSAs in Spanish as well as English. This creates a situation where Spanish-language materials can come into play, without me needing to seek them out, or feel that I am entering and critiquing a cultural space outside of my own. This sort of situation feels authentic to my experience of these materials, while also being sensitive to the ethical concerns outlined above, and as such I often make no attempt to avoid these sorts of interstitial materials when they appear.

With the above discussion in mind, it becomes apparent that FM radio bands serve primarily as a source of highly commercial, primarily English-language materials which give a veiled sense of “present day” immediacy to performance sets. AM radio bands, however are often quite different, and as such serve a different function in my practice as *Porpitid*. Due to the lower bandwidth of AM, the materials broadcast on it are more frequently local sports, talk, or religious materials, often with a low signal to noise ratio. This fact, coupled with the peculiar, modular synth-like artifacts present on the tightly packed AM frequencies leads me to largely use AM stations as noise generators. This can be through scrolling on unoccupied stations and

⁴⁷ See <https://radio-locator.com/cgi-bin/locate?select=city&city=San%20Diego&state=CA> (last accessed April, 2024)

exploring the resultant interference sound and timbral effects, or by tuning into highly garbled talk stations, especially sports broadcasts, which represent (especially to me as a non sports-fan) a sort of neutral material, particularly when the speech is highly obscured through interference noise.

Chapter One closing remarks

Having unpacked in a general way the materials I use, and the approaches I take in my practice as *Porpitid*, it will now be possible to discuss in more detail the ways in which these concerns are made manifest in a specific performance. The following chapters will examine two examples of this practice from a recent performance set, *i don't remember falling asleep* (2024). The examples discussed are two movements from this set, *catfishing*, and *dreamland*, which are both representative of my practice, and relatively contrasting in approach and style.

2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO “I DON’T REMEMBER FALLING ASLEEP (2023)

The above chapter has outlined generally the ways in which my practice as *Porpitid* relies on found materials, and dense audiovisual juxtaposition to explore individual paths through anachronistic media landscapes. The following chapter will expand on this introduction by discussing the specific aesthetic and functional evaluations which went into selecting materials for a particular performance set, *i don’t remember falling asleep*, which was recorded in November of 2023.

For many *Porpitid* performances, the general concerns and technical approaches discussed in Chapter One are explored within the framework of a certain theme or conceptual consideration. In the case of *i don’t remember falling asleep*, the set centers around an interest in late night television, including infomercials, televangelism and strange programming of various kinds experienced in a hazy state of half sleep. This concept creates a framework which is idiomatic of the surreal and psychedelic approaches I often take in this practice, while also allowing me to explore the unnerving, alien, or absurd qualities of the commercial video materials I have collected. Late night television programming is well known in the U.S. to be a rather barren landscape of long-form advertising, ancient reruns and D-roll material of various kinds, and as such this thematic framework proved an effective way to explore these sorts of.

***i don’t remember falling asleep* performance setup**

For this performance my live sampling hardware consisted of two vinyl record players, as well as a physical AM/FM radio, and online streaming radio via radio.garden. I also made use of a prerecorded audio track, and three synchronized streams of pre-rendered video. These videos

are shown on two sets of three display screens, with one set placed stage left, and the other stage right.⁴⁸ The videos are displayed to visitors so that each one appears on two screens simultaneously, with channels situated so that duplicate images are displayed on opposing sides of the stage, and on screens of different sizes/types. Used in this performance were two large, 4:3 tube televisions, three 16:9 flatscreens (two small and one large), as well as one small, 16:9 VGA-based computer monitor. As with elsewhere in my practice, this patchwork of screens from different times and contexts works to convey the collected and personal nature of the performance.

In addition to the physically patchwork nature of the screens in regards to size and shape, the aged and dysfunctional nature of this collection is emphasized by the fact that each screen has its own behaviors and qualities. Some of these behaviors are quite readily identifiable as damage, with one of the large CRTVs having its color channels misaligned, leading to a hazy, color-shifted image, while one of the HDMI>AV adapters used in this show was also malfunctioning, giving two screens a distorted and oversaturated appearance. To an extent, these irregularities help invoke the “haunted” or unsettling qualities described in Chapter One, and they also help to reinforce the found or “lived in” quality in the performance.

This lived-in quality is further exhibited in the seating and setup for the performance area. The screens were stacked on the floor, and on small end tables, with the floor in front of each set of TVs furnished by a colored rug. One of the television setups had a couch available for seating, while both had additional portable chairs. Each of these areas was furnished with a

⁴⁸ See *figures 1.2 and 1.4*, on pp.6-7, which illustrate the setup of the space from a number of angles.

coffee table or end table, and the space also featured small decorative items placed on the televisions like fake flowers, and a pair of flashing electrical clocks. These qualities (I hope) made the performance feel not only more like a “functional” space, but also invite visitors into a mindset somewhere in-between viewing an installation and an evening-length performance.

Further contributing to this installation-like quality was my own relative detachment from the seating space, with my live audio setup situated several feet behind the screens, and my back facing the audience. This staging doesn’t aim to hide my presence or my influence over the performance, but as discussed in Chapter One, seeks to convey a sense of “personal” performance, in which my attention is decidedly away from visitors. By staging the set in this way I hope to call attention to the environmental nature of the work, and the distributed network of interactions taking place, without entirely removing myself from the performance picture. This kind of staging also emphasizes both my position as central within the materials collected, as well as my relatively small status in comparison to the collected mass of objects.

Many of the video materials used in this set were sourced from VHS tapes I purchased in a lot on eBay in 2021, which contains home VCR footage recorded by someone in Wisconsin c.2005. Much of this footage consists of late night religious programming, advertisements, and television news. Other found video materials sampled in this performance included instructional DVDs on fishing and exercise, as well as episodes from mid 2000s television documentaries. In addition to these sampled videos are original materials including macro lens recordings I made of a cracked LCD screen and an assortment of abstract feedback improvisations of various kinds. The use of psychedelic feedback effects pervades the show, serving to act as a signifier of a strange and alien meta-environment of “haunted electronics” within which the sampled materials

are existing. This kind of juxtaposition is reinforced by the staging of the area, with the naturalistic feeling of the setup contrasting with the surreal qualities apparent in many of the audiovisual materials.

In Chapters Three and Four below I will offer an analysis of two movements from *i don't remember falling asleep*. In totality this performance set has seven movements, but I have selected here the two movements which best exemplify the practices outlined in Chapter One. These movements also display contrasting approaches, with the first, *catfishing* featuring many quick, prescriptive video edits, while *dreamland* features more of a general “drifting” approach to sample alignment.

Note that due to copyright concerns there are no video samples from this performance set attached to this dissertation. Although the activities described in the following chapters were noncommercial educational exercises undertaken for scholarly purposes, and as such fall under the terms of fair use, it is not my wish to distribute recorded materials which may call this fact into question.

3. “I DON’T REMEMBER FALLING ASLEEP - I: CATFISHING”

The first movement of *i don't remember falling asleep*, entitled *catfishing*, provides a good example of many of the features outlined above in regards to both *i don't remember falling asleep*, and my practice as *Porpitid* generally. The movement demonstrates how “mundane” sampled materials like ads and old vinyl can be juxtaposed with more abstract audiovisual elements like feedback and noise to create a surreal environment with its own idiomatic behaviors. In this movement, a base language of audiovisual feedback and noise is established, with samples from television programming appearing in increasingly dense and prolonged flurries of activity. The result is an environment which defamiliarizes the video samples, and enhances their surreal aspects, while the more alien, feedback-based textures again serve to induce a haunted aura and give a “voice” to the hardware elements. Moreover, this movement provides a strong example of how predetermined edits in the video material can be complimented by and contrasted with more free-associative and abstract live-sampling elements.

Before giving a more detailed analysis of this movement, it will be useful to first outline some of the audio and video materials present. Doing this will not only allow for familiarity with these materials when it comes time to discuss their organization relative to one another, but will also demonstrate the sorts of hardware setups which underly my feedback-based video work.

Audio/Video Materials in *catfishing*

The movement is supported throughout by droning audio feedback, which was pre-recorded in my office at UC San Diego using a loop between camcorder mics and CRTVs, with Ableton Live acting as an intermediary running filters, reverb etc. Several feedback

improvisations were recorded, with these improvisations being layered and processed to create a base texture. Also present in the prerecorded audio is the sound of a playback needle running around the paper label on a vinyl record, creating a harsh noisy timbre which grows steadily louder over the course of the movement. As the needle wears through the label, new tones of noise are uncovered, creating an unstable and evolving texture which is quite timbrally contrasting with the feedback materials. Crucially, both the feedback and the vinyl noise are sounds generated by allowing equipment to execute behaviors which are particular to themselves and to some extent “automatic.” These behaviors suggest machines left to their own devices, and reinforce the “late night” or unattended qualities I wanted to explore with this show. These qualities are further enhanced by the video elements, with static-like visual patterns and glitched SMPTE color bars appearing the the opening.

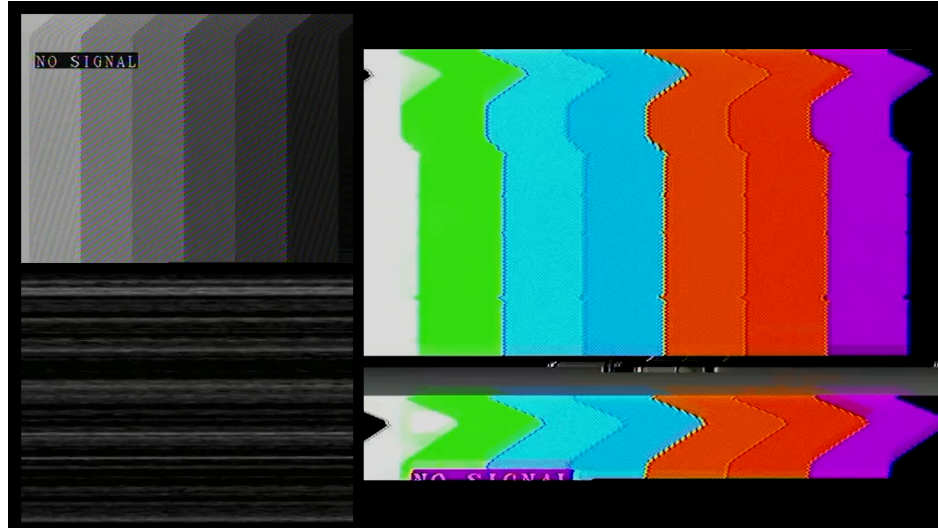


Figure 3.1: A screenshot from the first frame of *catfishing*, showing the juxtaposition of glitched SMPTE bars and visual noise.

These particular SMPTE bars were recorded from an HDMI>AV signal converter, which sends them when the unit is powered on, but not supplied with a digital signal. Two variations of

this image are used in the movement, one black and white, and the other in color. (*Figure 3.1*) The black and white image was routed from a fully functional adapter, to a Sima VFX unit, where the colors were desaturated, the vertical alignment altered, and the gain increased to create a jittering, unstable image in black and white. The second, full-color video uses SMPTE bars produced by a damaged device of the same model. This device creates the majority of the horizontal distortion in the image, with the Sima unit being used only to alter the color, and vertical alignment. This simple example demonstrates how hardware is used in my practice both to manufacture glitches, and to enhance existing ones.

These SMPTE bar images are quite static, and do not develop over time. Their presence alongside the ambient feedback/noise textures which begin this movement gives them a strong association with those sounds, and they work together to contribute to the semi-abandoned and dysfunctional environment which I aimed to create. Additionally, the glitching and jerking of these videos does, on occasion incidentally align with audio materials, creating an ambiguity as to whether or not interactivity is taking place. This fact plays not only on the recurring theme of synchronicity and indeterminacy in the show, but also helps to create a more immersive and ambiguous overall environment.

Over the course of the movement, the video shown in the bottom left corner of *figure 3.1* is proliferated to the other screens, becoming gradually more colorful and psychedelic as the movement progresses and more television samples are shown. To create this material, the prerecorded audio track for *catfishing* was sent from the audio output of my interface to the video input of a Panasonic video mixer, creating flickering static-like bars, whose brightness, width, and density are correlated to the spectral profile of the input sound. This image was then

fed into OBS, where its size was increased, and the opacity decreased, with this output then sent back into the Panasonic unit, creating a feedback loop. The mix between the raw input and the looped channel is roughly 60/40, leading the feedback to create a zooming delay effect, rather than visual saturation.⁴⁹

This black and white visual representation of the prerecorded audio track was then routed from the main out of the Panasonic unit, to video input one of a Roland video mixer. The channel two monitor output from this Roland mixer is sent to the video input of a Sima Editmaster VFX unit, which was used to boost the color saturation, and apply a tint shift effect. The video output from this unit is then sent back to video input two on the Roland unit, creating a simple feedback loop which cycles through saturated colors. The mix between video input one (containing the barred image) and video input two (containing colorful feedback) is controlled by using the black chroma key function on the Roland unit. Turning this knob allows more of the color-saturated feedback through, causing the darkest portions of the screen to gradually be replaced by bright, pulsating colors. See *figure 3.2* below for a diagram of this hardware configuration. Note that dotted lines represent colored feedback, while solid lines represent black and white visual noise.

⁴⁹ See sample video [visual_noise.mp4](#)

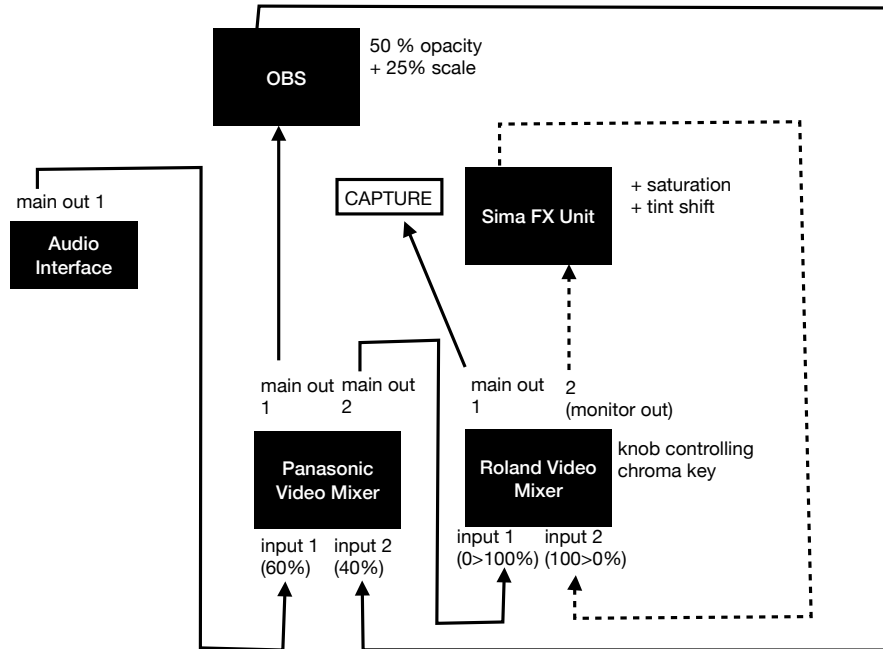


Figure 3.2: A diagram of the hardware setup used to generate video feedback for *catfishing*.

To create the final video used in performance I listened to the fixed-media component of *catfishing*, while manually increasing the presence of video input two, allowing more and more color saturated feedback into the mix over the course of roughly the first seven minutes. The result of this visually is that faded colors gradually emerge from the black and white images, becoming stronger and more vibrant as the movement progresses. As these colors consume the screen only the strongest lines of white remain, until eventually the image is entirely saturated with color, and the feedback channel is driven primarily by the tint shift of the Sima unit, rather than material coming in from the Panasonic unit. The sequence of four images in *Figure 3.3* gives a rough outline of how this material develops over time, with the images taken roughly two minutes apart, beginning at 0:00.

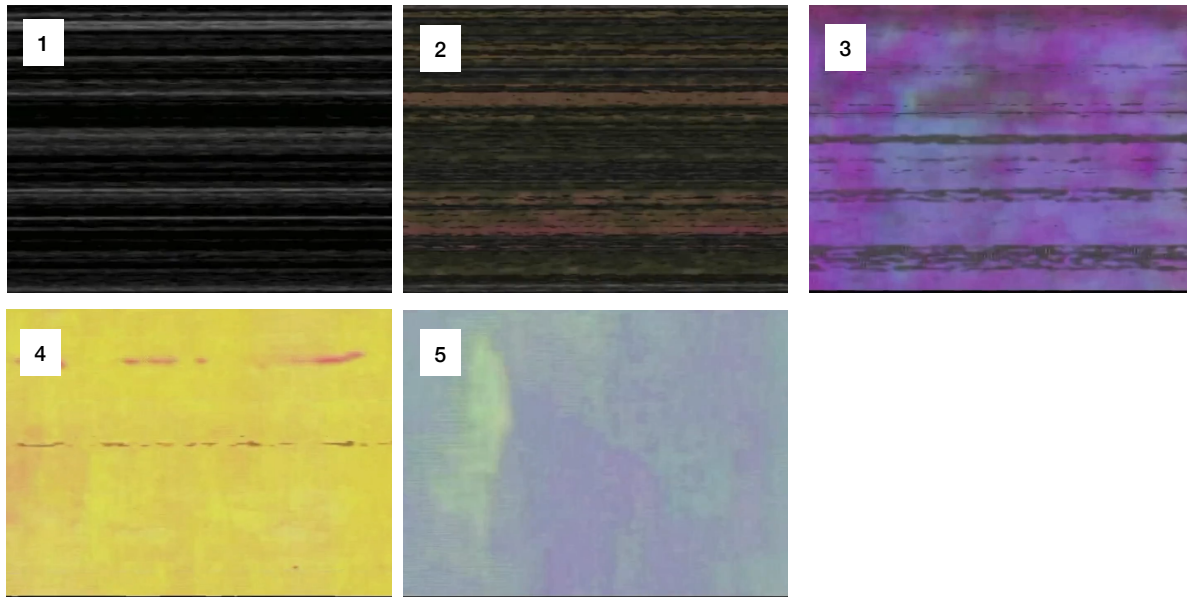


Figure 3.3: Five non-sequential frames of feedback material from *I:catfishing*. Frames are taken from 00:01, 2:00, 5:00, 7:00, and 10:00 respectively.

This sequence of audio responsive feedback is present on only one screen at the beginning of the show, and although it is often interrupted by other video sources, this material comes to dominate all three screens by the seven minute mark, with the final four minutes of video in the movement consisting primarily of this visual feedback. As the video proliferates each new iteration is a different take of the sequence. These were completed while listening to the movement, but without a stopwatch, causing slight asynchronicities and irregularities which give the footage a more “organic” differentiated look as a whole. Thematically, the gradual emergence of colors, and the proliferation of these feedback materials early on in the movement helps to establish the surreal tone of the movement by degrees in a way which is perhaps indicative of drifting into sleep.

The DVD and advertising samples used in this movement are often rather short, and serve initially as periodic interruptions to the feedback and SMPTE videos described above. Samples from secondhand sources include a workout DVD and a fishing DVD, infomercials

sourced from a VHS tape, as well as a “Bigfoot” documentary found on another tape, and several station bumpers I sourced from YouTube. These materials were selected not only for their highly mundane nature, which I hoped would contrast with the psychedelic feedback, but also for the cheesy or overdone qualities many of them possessed.

These two opposing types of material; television clips and hardware-based glitch and feedback effects, work together to form the primary visual language of *catfishing*. The gradually unfolding feedback processes “frame” the sampled television materials, which occur in increasingly long and semantically meaningful groupings. Many of these advertising and instructional samples are edited together in humorous ways which form a sort of meta-commentary out of short clips. Clips of “Bigfoot”, for example are sometimes juxtaposed with bold marketing claims, or commercials are edited to focus only on staged handshakes and smiles. These kinds of prefabricated edits are highly unidiomatic of my audio sampling practice, which tends to be much more loosely aligned and spontaneous, but they happen often in regards to video materials, and often serve here to highlight ridiculous, surreal, or unsavory elements of the clips sampled. The tightly choreographed, and prescriptive alignments of video material contrast both conceptually and perceptually with the hazier alignments in the live-sampled audio, creating an environment which relies on both fixed and spontaneous elements to generate interest.

Analysis of *catfishing*

As introduced above, the structure of *catfishing* is based around a linearly unfolding feedback process, which is interrupted by short television clips. These clips begin to “clump together” as the movement progresses, with these clumps, and the clips that comprise them both

becoming longer over time. The space between these clusters of television samples often features more abstract moments of live-sampling improvisation, and these too become longer and more densely packed as the movement progresses. We can see then that linear processes govern most aspects of development in *catfishing*. These sorts of general relationships between materials, that predetermine how a system will evolve over time, but leave the particulars open is quite a common way for me to structure performances in my practice as *Porpitid*.

As mentioned above, *catfishing* begins in a quite ambient space, with droning audio feedback accompanying visual noise and two screens of SMPTE bars in the video materials.⁵⁰ The title *catfishing* refers to the fact that this movement prominently features video samples from a DVD about best seasonal practices in catfishing, a video which was selected both for its mundane and dated qualities, but also for the obvious associations between fishing and advertisement. Material from this DVD serves as the first interruption to the video feedback, with a nine second appearance on one screen at 1:02. Between 1:40 and 2:30 the feedback materials gradually become brighter on one screen, as SMPTE materials continue to play on the other two. The live-sampling in this section consists of channel surfing on FM and streaming radio, with 60s rock and modern alternative music coming through in alternation while a vinyl record of insect sounds adds texture. These insect sounds blend well musically and thematically with the prerecorded drones, while the radios serve to introduce a more active “musical” component to the sound.

The next video interruption occurs at 2:01, beginning with an advertising bumper for an American television show, and continuing with a short flurry of clips from the workout DVD,

⁵⁰ See *figure 3.1* on p.40

and a television program about the search for “Bigfoot.” These materials will appear with more “functionality” later, and this interjection serves largely to establish their presence in the visual language of the movement, as well as to further cement the “back and forth” behaviors between feedback and television clips described above. After this flurry of clips, footage settles on the famous “Patterson-Gimlin” Bigfoot footage on one screen, while live-sampled 60s rock from the radio plays. This footage was selected because it is at once something “fantastical” as well as mundane and familiar, representing a piece of folk mythology which has been flattened and commercialized to the extreme. The radio materials here are processed with a slight reverb, helping them to fit into the “spacious” abandoned environment implied so far in the movement.

The Bigfoot footage is interrupted by a salesperson at 3:07, who exclaims a rather generic “Don’t touch that dial, because you’ve never seen anything like this!”, at which point the video cuts away from Bigfoot to mundane fishing footage on one screen, and a slowed version of the workout footage on another. With this workout footage slowed, we can see the participants hugging themselves awkwardly, as the text “Stay in comfort zone” is displayed beneath them. This edit of the workout footage represents the first instance where the surreal or unusual elements of a video are highlighted so clearly, and the moment is somewhat uncomfortable and/or humorous. The humor of this moment is in part provided by the fact that the fishing footage with which this moment is juxtaposed contains cheesy, dated-sounding music and dialogue. The tone shifts slightly at 3:24, where the catfishing footage vanishes, leaving video feedback on two screens, and the text “Stay in comfort zone” to fill screen *B*, where it flashes rhythmically for fifteen seconds. As this text flashes a voice on the radio sings “Home is wherever I’m with you”, an excellent example of chance synchronicity between pre-recorded and live-sampled materials.

When this video drops out, leaving only three channels of asynchronous feedback we are left in something of a “void” relatively speaking. The more abstract nature of this space contrasts with the more prescriptive and humorous edits of the ads, creating a back and forth where listeners are barraged with signs, then left to sit in an environment of a different nature and relative sparsity. This surreal space is unbroken for roughly thirty seconds before advertising bumpers enter suddenly at 4:03.

The two bumpers displayed here were selected both for their humorous nature, and because they contain an interesting blend of real-world and fictional elements. Some of these bumpers contain fictional ads for invented business supposed to exist within the setting of a television show. These ads have ridiculous taglines, and often come across as shoddy or cheap. Other bumpers, however contain ads for real-world businesses or products, and present the actual taglines for these as part of the bumper. Working with these ads in particular allowed me to juxtapose the ridiculous nature of this fictional world directly with our own to humorous effect. This material is used in a rather more startling way later on, but for now the effect is rather ambiguous, or perhaps humorous given the nature of the ads shown.

Between 4:13, and 5:20, multiple live-audio sources play, including vinyl records of 16th-century harp music, and recited poetry, as well as modern radio from a local “alternative” station. This blend of materials is rather abstract and non-prescriptive, with materials floating in longer chunks, providing a contrast to the more active, choreographed nature of the ads. Additionally, this section displays a blend of materials which is quite idiomatic in this practice, where no more than two tracks with vocals are present at once. This sort of configuration leaves

space for words to intelligibly contextualize one another, without the density being so critical that nothing can be known about individual sources.

Because of my desire for some level of clarity, a large part of the performance practice of managing audio as *Porpitid* involves using the simple gain, pan, and reverb parameters on my MIDI controller to create the right balance and separation between tracks. One can see management of this balance in action around 5:25, as the poem is faded from the texture shortly after the fisherman (appearing in the video) begins talking. There is also a replacement of radio sources around this point, with the FM station being crossfaded with streaming radio. By periodically replacing old sound sources with new ones I aim to create a sort of “churning”, with overall textures usually changing rather gradually over time. This fact can be seen throughout *catfishing*, where although ads interrupt the live sound sources frequently, the audio textures evolve slowly, and rather independently of this process towards a configuration of greater density.

The period of more abstract, live-sampling improvisation described above continues until 6:26, when advertising bumpers return, this time on all screens simultaneously. In this instance, the bumpers have been edited so that ads for fictional businesses precede ads for the U.S. armed forces, which then return to ads for comparatively mundane services like restaurants and jewelry stores. This moment of rather dark humor demonstrates the reach of the spectacle of commercial consumption, and the extent to which advertising subsumes and reflects all aspects of life. Interestingly, it seems that “in the wild” the bumpers were never aired this way, with armed forces ads always appearing alone (in my experience). This fact perhaps demonstrates an understanding of the optics involved in the situation I have created here on the part of the

advertisers, a fact which itself demonstrates the power of jarring juxtapositions to point out aspects of the media materials that surround us which may not otherwise be apparent.

A similar example of altering ads through simple editing and juxtaposition occurs beginning at 6:50. Here an ad for a moneymaking method has its video (but not audio) recut into an ever quickening and shortening loop, which highlights the fake social interactions being enacted as the enthusiastic narration plays out normally. This sequence of handshakes and awkward smiles ends with the narrator stating that the salesman is "... a professional moneymaker with the natural born skills to motivate and teach anyone who he comes in contact with that it's possible to reach your dreams!" This quote is followed by a hard cut to the "Bigfoot" footage, where a new narrator states "Another team believes they too, have found evidence of Bigfoot." This harsh cut between a "get rich quick" style sales pitch and the discussion of an illusive cryptid is another simple example of comedic commentary. This commentary is made better by the fortuitous inclusion of the chorus from the 1930s song "Fine and Dandy" which came in by chance via digital streaming radio.

The lyrics of this excerpt (sugar candy when I've got you/ then I only see the sunny side/ and even trouble has its funny side. When you're gone/ sugar candy/ I get lonesome/ I get so blue") have humorous connotations with the enticing nature of commodities implied by the presence of the preceding ads. This sample ended up (by chance) quite well contextualizing the movement's commentary on the often deceptive and unsettling nature of advertisements, but its appearance in the mix was not the result of randomness *per se*. I selected the station on which the song was broadcast because of the older style of music they often play at night, and I wanted these sorts of materials to contribute to a strange, anachronistic dream-state sonically. In this

performance I just happened to get particularly lucky, with the lyrical materials also being relevant to the movement in ways I could not have foreseen. This example emphasizes the role of indeterminacy and improvisation in the show, as well as the way in which this practice relies on learned experiences of the media environments in which I am working to build an improvisational approach which can encourage synchronicities to arise.

Moments based more singularly around incidental, live-sampled alignments are exemplified by the materials between 3:04, and 4:03, (discussed above), as well as the section between 6:26 and 10:44 which closes out the movement. In both of these sections the more abstract, hazy alignments and textures created by colliding samples stand in contrast to the moments featuring more choreographed video materials. These abstract moments are far less prescriptive, and perhaps offer the audience more space to “cut their own paths” through the environment as listeners. As Nick Zammuto of the Dutch-American band The Books states in a 2010 interview "Just by placing two disparate elements next to each other, they immediately start a conversation as your brain tries to wrap itself around their relationship."⁵¹

The final interruption of the movement occurs at 10:45 with edited clips from the workout DVD. This moment is rather playful and unambiguously silly, with clips of the (many) times where the instructor exclaims “bang!”, “bam!”, or some similar derivative lined up together. These last moments are cut with cartoonish percussion music from a 33 RPM vinyl record playing back at 75 RPM, increasing the outlandish and slapstick nature of the moment. In this rather silly moment, the alien feedback textures disappear entirely, thrusting the environment into a space much more reminiscent of an actual living room viewing experience, with the

⁵¹ Ganz, *The Books*

exception of the humorous edits. This moment again provides a contrast between more mundane and surreal aspects of my practice, with both aspects often being present in various ways over the course of a performance.

In *catfishing* we can see how collected video materials are often highly choreographed and pre-organized, and how these pre-planned interactions can mingle with more improvisatory and indeterminate behaviors to create surreal new environments. The rather prescriptive edits present in the videos help to initiate certain mindsets regarding the strange or humorous nature of the media presented, while live-sampled audio materials from potentially surprising and anachronistic sources add further layers of less prescriptive context to the situation. In this way we can again see how processes of composition and improvisation intertwine to produce a complex and unique experience. We can also see many of the kinds of audio and video samples idiomatic to my practice in this movement, with both familiar and obscure sources of different types coming together to highlight a surreal and pluralistic environment.

In this movement, the highly choreographed nature of the video, along with the “living” qualities displayed by video feedback can also create the impression that the television samples are almost being “regurgitated” up and presented from within the feedback environments. This sense further imbues the televisions with a sense of autonomy, which is enhanced by the fact that I am visibly manipulating audio materials in performance, but that the video seems to be “just happening.” This implication is enhanced by the use of dated television equipment, since the first assumption is perhaps not that they are being run digitally from a laptop, making these behaviors seem more otherworldly than they might on more modern or formless display systems.

In all *catfishing* demonstrates not only how pre-fabricated materials and spontaneous discoveries can function together in my work, but also shows how more abstract and prescriptive kinds of sampling can be balanced. The movement also demonstrates a proclivity towards the humorous use of discarded or incidental cultural materials to critique our surroundings in a way which is both playful, and unsettling. Many of these conceptual aspects will also be present in the movement analyzed next in Chapter Four, but they will be expressed quite differently, with that movement having a generally more “abstract” quality.

4. “I DON’T REMEMBER FALLING ASLEEP - III: DREAMLAND”

In some ways, *dreamland* is similar to *catfishing*, with both movements containing pre-recorded materials which serve as a template over which to improvise. Where *catfishing* relies heavily on comedic cuts between video clips, *dreamland* allows premade samples to play out in longer form, and become materials over which more abstract and spontaneous associations can be generated. This is, not to say that aspects of the abstract and spontaneous don’t exist in *catfishing*. As discussed in Chapter Three they do, but the balance of concerns is different in this movement, and as such these qualities manifest in a way which is somewhat more “fluid.”

In this movement the basic visual language consists of “blobs,” or spirals made with video feedback, and a heavily degraded, and feedback saturated video clip of a c.2005 news broadcast. These videos serve a much more ambient function than the clips in *catfishing* do, and there are no choreographed juxtapositions of a comedic nature. The news clip has frequent skips and visual distortion due to a defect in the VCR used to digitize it. This damage to the clip means that while the gist of an interview about the arrest of a Hollywood lawyer is recognizable, the conversation is not perfectly intelligible. This distorted nature is rather cartoonishly enhanced with simple feedback effects in post-processing, adding to a surreal and dysfunctional atmosphere.⁵² Nevertheless, underneath these layers of distortion celebrity names, and mentions of Hollywood come through, coloring the environment with materials overtly related to big “Industry” entertainment, which in this case is portrayed as decaying in grotesque, psychedelic fashion.

⁵² See the image on the bottom left of *figure 1.7* on page fifteen

As the movement progresses, the audio from this news source continues, while the video cuts to two versions of the same spiraling feedback image running at different frame rates, with different levels of saturation. This processing creates the sense of a “lag,” or of hardware operating beyond its capabilities. Although this is literally untrue, this sort of processing supports not only the sense of precariousness that this practice thrives on, but also creates a further, exaggerated sense of anachronism. This anachronistic quality is present in the live-sampled materials as well, with early 1960s jazz and lounge records appearing, processed with heavy reverb and manual pitch/speed modulations adding to the dreamy, dysfunctional quality. These vinyl manipulations take up more of the texture as the movement progresses, increasing a sense of otherworldly malfunction as hypnotic, psychedelic spirals and pulses of various kinds continue to proliferate in the video materials. Again, in the context of my work these manipulations seek to increase the otherworldly “living” nature of the work, sending yet another signal that although the environment is made up of familiar-sounding materials, they are functioning together in a new space, with behaviors both independent from, and colored by their origins.

Musically, this movement remains more abstract than *catfishing*, with the vinyl records supported by EDM music on streaming radio, as well as video game samples, and original “ambient IDM-like” electronic music in the prerecorded track. The two records used in this movement were selected for juxtaposition because they relied on vaguely similar instrumentations from a similar time period, and contained music which contrasted quite anachronistically with the other audiovisual elements present, without contributing lyrics. The lack of lyrics is significant since *catfishing*, and the second movement (not discussed in this

dissertation) rely heavily on spoken words and sung lyrics. With the audio from the prerecorded news tape finally interrupted, a vinyl and radio-based improvisation is left to fill the remainder of the movement with more abstract materials in the absence of vocal content.

Movements like *dreamland*, which center more on live sampling than pre-organized audio or video tend to take a quite free-associative approach, presenting materials from a variety of sources with little in common, and allowing them to interact in gently curated ways. The blend of materials seeks to create a space outside of time, where each inclusion carries a mix of associations and qualities from other places. This kind of environment is referential to the process of collection to begin with, where materials are brought together according to organizing principles through a lived process combining happenstance and curated selection. In this way, the movement is the most heavily focused on improvisation of any movement so far, and most directly exhibits what I would consider to be the “typical” presentation of my practice as *Porpitid*.

Closing Remarks

The above examples from my practice as *Porpitid* have shown how curated collections of various kinds can be used as artistic material for a solo improvisatory practice. This practice allows for engagements with culture which can be quite direct and spontaneous, while also allowing for elements of pre-structuring. In the following chapters I will discuss a different approach, where a pre-structured framework was notated, and used as a way to explore similar ideas of collection and material presentation along with other musicians.

5.

OVERVIEW OF “THIS WAY FOREVER” (2023)

This Way Forever, composed for in^set (David Aguila, Teresa Díaz de Cossio and Ilana Waniuk) in 2023 seeks to approach the collection of materials and personal experience in a different way from my practice as *Porpitid*. Where *Porpitid* is a solo practice, based around materials I have collected as an individual, in *This Way Forever* I created a musical and theatrical framework which invites other musicians to present their own collected materials of various kinds. Rather than physical media, the materials “collected” by in^set include text samples from sources like favorite books, or the ensemble members’ artist bios, and musical samples of repertoire for their primary instrument. In working with this kind of material I hoped to create a piece which was an identifiable patchwork of personalities, woven together into a cohesive and balanced whole.

Although Aguila, Díaz, and Waniuk are classically trained performers on trumpet, flute and violin respectively, they also engage in a varied and experimental practice. As such, another goal with this work was to focus on modes of performance apart from their “primary” instruments. As a multi-instrumental performer myself, I was interested in the ways in which an artist’s personality and approach can carry over to a diverse range of situations, even apart from playing on a primary instrument. As such, the performers in *This Way Forever* spend a large part of the piece speaking, singing, playing other instruments, and enacting theatrics. Each performer sits at a table, with one found percussion instrument and an assortment of small winds (like tuning pipes, whistles and recorders) as well as mallets.⁵³ Additionally, performers one (Díaz) and three (Waniuk) have small, toy acoustic guitars, which are sometimes strummed, sometimes

⁵³ See *figure 5.1* for full instrumentation

struck with mallets, and sometimes treated like theatrical props. These kinds of found and toy instruments also point towards the idea of collection, representing an assortment of things the players of in^set and I mostly “had around.” These materials are also sometimes used to provide a humorous counterpart to the more “serious” presentation of primary instruments in the piece.

In addition to these nonstandard instruments, player one has their flute, which begins out of sight in a case, and player two (Aguila) has their trumpet hidden under the table on a stand. Player three’s violin is somewhat unique, and is placed away from the performer altogether, on its own table stage left.⁵⁴ As the performance progresses, the players gradually begin to assemble and prepare to play their instruments, with each player having a featured solo or soloist moment near the middle of the work. These solos often feature surprising or humorous “twists” however, with instruments sometimes being used in ways other than one might expect. In this way the decision to avoid primary instruments is worked into the piece as a musical and theatrical parameter, with fragments of non-primary instrumental performance surrounding the gradual assembly of the performers’ primary instruments, which are finally given more prominence later on.

In organizing the piece largely around actions aside from the playing of their primary instruments, each performer is treated as a broader reservoir of experience, rather than primarily as a producer of sound on a given instrument. At times, this reservoir of experience is activated directly, such as when performers are asked to provide text or musical quotations. At other times, this experience is relied on more obliquely, such as when performers are asked to play unfamiliar instruments like percussion or guitar. In these situations, performers are pushed to access their

⁵⁴ See *figure 5.2* on p.61 for setup diagram

physicality in different ways, with each individual's approach to this unfamiliar situation contributing to the chaotic and heterogenous character of the piece.

This character is enhanced by the nature of the pre-recorded stereo track, which consists largely of a dense, noisy drone in the first half, and constantly shifting series of musical styles in the second half. The electronics act both as a way to support and frame the performer's actions, and as a way to personify my contributions to the environment. In the first regard, the electronics often highlight certain performer actions through the inclusion of percussive punctuations, changes in density etc. This helps to create a quite cohesive relationship between musical and theatrical elements, which often work closely together. In the second regard, there are many moments when the electronics feature my own instrumental playing or singing voice, while also "sampling" from common aspects of my practice. In this way the electronics also represent a literalization of the complex "environment" of the piece which the performers are navigating. As the work progresses this environment becomes increasingly unpredictable, developing more of an independent personality from the performers. In navigating this heterogenous collection of both musical and physical materials, the performers must rely on a broad range of prior experiences, while also displaying incredible flexibility of approach. This display of flexibility becomes the central point of interest in the work.

| <u>Instruments + Implements:</u> | | |
|---|---|---|
| <u>Player 1</u> | <u>Player 2</u> | <u>Player 3</u> |
| piccolo: hidden from view, in case | trumpet: in C, in case on desk | violin: begins at separate setup. Tuning is shown on the following page |
| flute: disassembled, in case behind table | bottle: high pitch | metal pot: with a med. short decay |
| low metal pot: with a short decay | bell: a small hand-rung service bell | harmonica: in D |
| whistle: any whistle which may be played softly w/ one hand | recorder: will be held only, not played | small guitar: w/ three strings, tuning shown on following page |
| small guitar: w/ three strings, tuning shown on following page | self light trigger: a push-button power outlet controlling the off/on state of the light for your own desk. Hidden under the table and controlled with the foot. | recorder: will be held only, not played |
| self light trigger: a push-button power outlet controlling the off/on state of the light for your own desk. Hidden under the table and controlled with the foot. | vln. light trigger 2: a similar push-button trigger controlling the lamp at the violin desk. | self light trigger: a push-button power outlet controlling the off/on state of the light for your own desk. Hidden under the table and controlled with the foot. |
| hard felt mallets | ASCII or MIDI foot switch: to control MAX/MSP patch running prerecorded electronics. | vln. light trigger 1: a similar push-button trigger controlling the lamp at the violin desk. |
| violin bow | hard felt mallets | hard felt mallets |
| | one trumpet mute of choice | violin bow + rosin |
| | trumpet stand: visible to audience | |

Figure 5.1: Score excerpt from *This Way Forever*, showing instrumentation

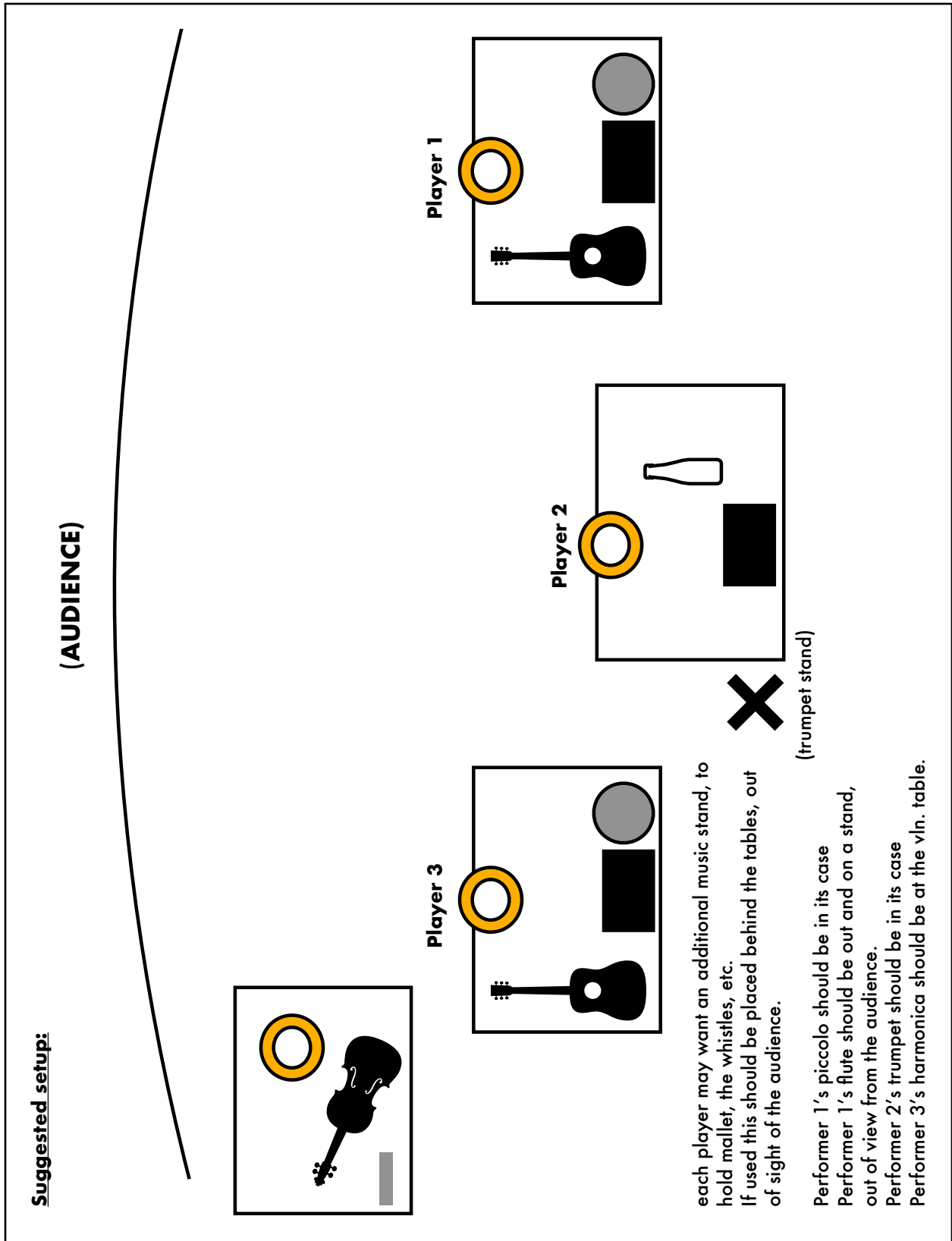


Figure 5.2: Score excerpt from *This Way Forever*, showing a setup diagram

In order to help manage this chaotic situation, each player controls a small overhead lamp with a foot switch, which is used to light their immediate area, and help call attention to certain actions at certain times. Some of these actions are quite mundane, like player three applying rosin to their bow in m.32, or player one assembling their flute in mm.23-24. The attention management provided by the lighting effects allows for certain actions like these, which would otherwise be taken as “non performative” to be emphasized and isolated as performative actions in their own right. In addition to highlighting actions which may otherwise not stand out as “performative”, this kind of lighting configuration also allows for the actions of non-illuminated players to be hidden to an extent. The obscurity of non-illuminated actions is supported not only by the fact that the actions of obscured players occur in relative darkness, but also by the fact that a viewers eye is (ideally) drawn more often to illuminated players than non-illuminated ones. In these ways the lighting can also create an increased possibility for surprise, in addition to isolating or emphasizing certain actions.

This Way Forever. Notation

Notation for *This Way Forever* is complex at times. Since each performer is often speaking, playing percussion, and operating their foot switch (nearly) simultaneously, the performance notation can be rather dense, and each player reads on a grand staff. This notation generally shows theatrical and vocal actions on the top staff, while instrumental performance and lighting cues are displayed on the bottom staff. This organization basically means that actions completed with the face or voice are shown on the top staff, while actions completed with an

instrument, or the body are shown on the bottom staff.⁵⁵

In addition to the actions completed in performance, there are also a number of pre-performance procedures which must be undertaken, such as the selection of text quotes or musical samples. To organize this information, the work makes use of a reference system, where boxed words above the top staff in the score are linked to instructions in the performance notes. There, performers can find detailed information about pre-realizing certain materials, which are to be deployed at notated moments in the score. An example of this can be seen in *Figure 5.3* below, which shows player one's part in m.2, alongside the corresponding performance instruction from the performance notes. Note that circled abbreviations indicate how the material should be performed, with "Sp." being spoken, "S" being sung, and "W" being whispered.

The figure is divided into two parts. On the left is a musical score excerpt for two staves. Above the top staff, there is a circled 'Sp.' followed by the text 'boring, procedural' and a box containing '[instructions 1A]'. The top staff contains a musical phrase starting with a dynamic marking 'mf'. Below the staves, there is a horizontal line with two 'x' marks and an arrow pointing from the first 'x' to the second. Below this line are two boxes labeled 'ON' and 'OFF'. On the right is a box labeled 'Instructions 1A+B' containing the text: 'instructions relating use, assembly etc. for any item **player 1** has lying around the house. this item should not be related to music'.

Figure 5.3: Score excerpt from m2. of player one's part for *This Way Forever*, (left) showing an example of a "fill in the blanks" style performance instruction, along with the corresponding instruction from the performance notes (right).

This kind of material is common in the piece, and this sort of notation is used throughout the score to give instructions about facial expressions as well as text selection, and other

⁵⁵ An in-context example of these elements working together is given in *Figure 5.6* on p.66.

theatrical actions. *Figures 5.5* below demonstrates how these boxed instructions can be applied to facial expressions, showing an excerpt from the score on the left, and the corresponding explanation from the performance notes on the right. *Figure 5.4* demonstrates a simpler, more “self-explanatory” action, which does not warrant further explanation in the performance notes. In either case, the boxed instruction may be accompanied by an italicized expressive instruction shown immediately above. These cues give the performers information about how a given action should be executed. These cues are often quite subjective, and sometimes ask performers to imagine the way they would speak or act in a certain situation or environment. These elements provide further avenues for individual expression of personalities and personal behaviors, increasing the sense of a collected assortment of heterogenous materials.

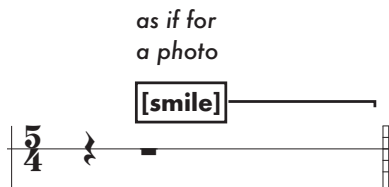


Figure 5.4: Score excerpt from m.17 of player one’s part for *This Way Forever*, showing a “self explanatory” facial cue. The italicized text above gives expressive information about performance of the action denoted in the box below.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for three players, labeled plyr.1, plyr.2, and plyr.3. Each player's part consists of a top staff with a treble clef and a bottom staff with a bass clef. Above the top staff of each player, there is a box labeled "[face A]" with a horizontal line extending to the right, indicating a performance instruction. Below the bottom staff of each player, there are two boxes labeled "ON" and "OFF" with a horizontal line between them, indicating lamp states. The measure number "15" is written at the beginning of each player's part. To the right of the score, there is a box labeled "face A:" followed by three lines of text: "Player 1 assume a face inspired by Player 2", "Player 2 assume a face inspired by Player 3", and "Player 3 assume a face inspired by Player 1".

Figure 5.5: Score excerpt from m.15 *This Way Forever*, (left) showing an example of a “facial expression” style performance instruction, along with the corresponding instruction from the performance notes (right).

The lights are always notated on the bottom staff. If percussion material is also present on this staff, then the lamp states are notated on a sixth line, shown somewhat below the standard five-line staff. In these instances, “ON” and “OFF” indications for the lamps are show below the

staff, while expressive instructions and dynamics are indicated above the staff. A typical instance of notation, combining many of the features discussed above is shown in *figure 5.6* below.

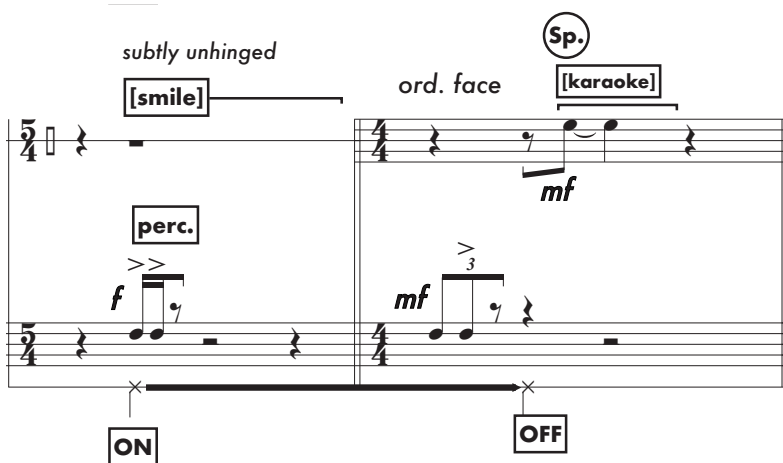


Figure 5.6: Score excerpt from mm.17-18 of player two's part for *This Way Forever*, showing how notational elements described above are combined in context.

In addition to these performance actions, there are also general notes given to explain certain measures. These notes allow for in-depth elaboration of important points, and can relate either to individual players, or the entire ensemble, depending on the placement of the note. If the text "see note (#)" appears below the electronics staff, the note applies to the entire ensemble, whereas if a note appears below a specific player's part, the note only applies to that player.

Figure 5.7 on the page sixty-eight gives an example of these notes in context, showing both the indication in the score, and the explanatory text from the performance notes.

The electronics are notated on the bottom staff of the score, and since this work is preformed with a click they are notated in a rather general, and minimalistic way. The use of a click in this piece was decided upon because the density of unfamiliar responsibilities and nature of the performance setup with difficult lines of sight made working without one exceptionally cumbersome. The performers and I found that they were actually able to perform many of the

vocal and theatrical materials much more freely and comfortably with the click, since there was less attention devoted to counting, and as such we decided its use would support, rather than hinder their ability to be flexible with these elements of the work.

16 Quasi senza tempo

plyr.1 [face A] as if for a photo [smile] [karaoke] Sp. mf

plyr.2 [face A] subtly unhinged [smile] ord. face [karaoke] Sp. mf

plyr.3 [face A] whistling [smile] obviously fake [karaoke] Sp. mf

see note 2

see note 3

Note 2: Whistle something which you might whistle to yourself while working, or absently doing something. Perform in this style, as if making music only for your own amusement. The material whistled is up to the performer, but should not be too fast or active, exhibiting a laid back, but cheerful feel. The material should not be in time with the metronome.

Note 3: The vocal materials in this bar are provided by the performer, and as such should be performed in an appropriate style to the text provided. Try to speak only when not lit, so the audience doesn't see your mouths moving, but sees only percussion playing.

Figure 5.7: A score excerpt from mm.15-18 of *This Way Forever*. The placement of “see note 2” below player two’s part indicates that this note applies only to their performance, while the placement of “see note 3” below the electronics indicates that the note that applies to all players. The text for notes 2 and 3 are reproduced below the score insert.

6.

ANALYSIS OF “THIS WAY FOREVER” (2023)

This Way Forever unfolds in a single movement, lasting about ten minutes and using a large, roughly binary form, with mm.1-88 making up the first section, and mm.89-173 making up the second. The first section is characterized by dense clusters of fragmented percussion and speech, with players turning their lights on and off frequently and for short periods of time to highlight certain actions. In this section, each player “works towards” the use of their primary instrument, either by assembling it, or by undertaking preparatory actions like rosinning and tightening bows etc. At the culmination of this section (mm.63-89) each performer plays their primary instrument for the first time, with the results often being surprising or comical in some way.

The second section is characterized by much more vocal and theatrical performance, with a near total lack of percussion playing, and no primary-instrumental performance until the very end. In this section performers can focus on lines and behaviors in a way which is more “natural” and less fragmented than the introduction. This formal organization creates a situation where the piece seems to “split open” in the middle, with the constantly shifting collection of actions giving way to more stable materials. This structure creates a sense that the piece accretes together over time from fragments, a process which was, to me analogous to the way personalities and practices are built up from fragments of experience, which are processed into a whole unit.

In this chapter I will discuss in greater detail how the collected materials are organized in order to effectively explore ideas about personality, personal history and contrasting perspectives in *This Way Forever*. This examination will proceed linearly, analyzing first mm.1-88, and then m.89 to the end. In doing this I will outline general organizational schemes which govern the

piece, while giving specific examples of how they coordinate various performer behaviors. This approach will be useful because as we will see *This Way Forever* is not rigorously structured, but does function around a relatively stable set of principles which help to create cohesion among the sometimes disparate musical and theatrical materials.

Generally, there are five broad kinds of behavior which performers explore in *This Way Forever*; speaking, singing, primary instrumental performance, non-primary instrumental performance and theatrics. The last category, of course, has nearly universal overlap with the other categories, but here the term refers largely to facial expressions, or theatrical actions which are given focus silently.⁵⁶ Balancing the appearance of these events often involves rotating between kinds of visible behaviors, as well as using broadly symmetrical structures to organize performer responsibilities. These sorts of structures are again general rather than rigorously systematic, and serve as ways to organize the chaotic elements of the piece, while maintaining a degree of flexibility and spontaneity.

Figure 6.1 below demonstrates a system of colored boxes I have used to show which types of behaviors are being performed, and illuminated at any given time. Note that boxes with solid borders indicate illuminated actions, while boxes with dashed borders denote hidden ones.

⁵⁶ This is to say that the players performing the action are silent, the overall texture of the work is seldom silent or even very quiet.

This Way Forever
for in^set
J. Bourdeau

= theatrical actions
 = primary instrument
 = non-primary instrument
 = singing
 = speaking

♩ = 55

Each performer should situate themselves onstage making necessary adjustments to their setup and preparing to begin. Once done, performers should make eye contact, and give a visual signal that they are ready to start playing immediately proceed to notated material in a dramatic, comically sudden fashion. The contrast between the casual nature of the setup and the dramatic nature of the music is the joke.

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

(Click ON)

see note 1

Figure 6.1: A score excerpt from mm.1-6 of *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present on the first page of notation. Conveniently, this pagination roughly aligns with the first phrase of music.

In looking at the first page of the score (*figure 6.1*) one can see rough, inexact symmetries governing the placement of materials. Measure two begins with player one and three speaking nearly simultaneously, while player two enters last with singing. Measure four shows a very similar figure, this time initiated by players two and one speaking, while player three closes the gesture with singing. These sorts of imperfect reflections are again used to maintain a rough balance between performers, and to give a sense that the piece contains an even blend of elements. Visually, I also hope that this approach helps to strike some sort of balance with how the eye might move around the ensemble as lights come on and off. In regards to hidden

elements, this page also displays a kind of alternation which is typical of the first section's behaviors. An example of this can be seen in mm.4-6, where performers present illuminated vocals with hidden percussion playing in m.4, and then hidden vocals and illuminated percussion in m.6. This sort of configuration where illuminated behaviors of one type are supported by hidden behaviors of another type before the roles switch is also quite common to this first section. These two principles of balance, though not being formalized or adhered to in a rigorous way help to give the work a feeling of constantly tumbling forward, with actions churning from hidden to illuminated in a loosely structured series of alternations.

In performance, *This Way Forever* begins very suddenly, with the performers instructed to turn their lamps on and darken the stage lights before taking a moment to sit down and organize their setups in preparation to play. The electronics should be triggered on, and the performers' lights triggered off suddenly and simultaneously, without any signal to the audience that the performance is about to begin.⁵⁷ This sudden start is made particularly jarring (and perhaps comical) by the fact that the electronics are quite harsh and loud in the opening bars. Also jarring is the fact that the musicians transition so suddenly from "natural" behaviors to the highly choreographed ones which appear in m.2. This juxtaposition between "natural" and "theatrical" behaviors is both emphasized and challenged over the course of the work, with this beginning serving as the first way to explore this idea. The opening pages also, rather crucially, set up a sense that "anything can happen." The jarring beginning, coupled with the use of

⁵⁷ In the live documentation attached to this dissertation we took this idea somewhat farther, and the group suddenly began playing in the middle of my pre-performance introduction of the piece.

unexpected instruments and strange behaviors in the coming bars signals that the environment we have suddenly entered is an unpredictable one.⁵⁸

In spite of this unpredictable quality, however, there is often an overt connectedness which keeps the work from becoming too chaotic. On the second page, for example player one produces their small guitar in m.8, one bar after the electronics play a slide guitar sample. These sorts of interactions show how the electronics and performers can work together to establish a certain surreal but consistent audiovisual language. We will see these sorts of relationships (and the use of the guitar in this regard specifically) several times throughout the first half of the work. In mm.7-13 the organizational symmetries break down a bit, largely in order to give player three time to take their bow, and player two time to get their bell. Still, there is a balance evident between visible actions, with players one, two and three performing roughly two bars of visible material each before player two rings their bell in m.14. This bell is doubled in the electronics, and will appear there many more times over the course of the piece, although player two does not use their bell again. This exchange gives another example of how performer actions can be supported by, or “duplicated to” the tape.

Also of note on page two is that in mm.10-12 player three tightens their violin bow as if in preparation to play, an action which represents the first instance of material related to primary instruments. Just before this, in m.8, player one additionally introduces the small guitars, a rather silly looking toy instrument which will play an increasingly comical role as the piece progresses. Here we can see also a juxtaposition between the toylike guitar, and actions more closely related

⁵⁸ See sample_1.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials from “m.0” to m.16.

to the primary instruments. This connection too will become more explicit over time, and as such we can see that page two represents the earliest introduction of several important behaviors.

The next important material introduced is the motive of facial expressions, which player two introduces with a “genuine and friendly” smile in m.14. This behavior is immediately juxtaposed with more exaggerated faces made by all three performers in unison in m.15. In this bar, each ensemble member is asked to caricature some aspect of another in an act of playful mimicry. The text from the performance notes describing the five imitative facial expressions that occur in the work is reproduced below, in *figure 6.2*.

Facial expressions:

These should be predetermined by each performer, and be delivered in such a way as to not look completely natural, but somewhat “mask-like”. The performers should be obviously acting when putting on **faces A-D**, but **face X** should feel somewhat more natural.

- face A:** Player 1 assume a face inspired by Player 2
Player 2 assume a face inspired by Player 3
Player 3 assume a face inspired by Player 1
- face B:** Player 1 assume a face inspired by Player 3
Player 2 assume a face inspired by Player 1
Player 3 assume a face inspired by Player 2
- face C:** Player 1 imitate Face B, as performed by Player 2
Player 2 imitate Face B, as performed by Player 3
Player 3 imitate Face B, as performed by Player 1
- face D:** Player 1 imitate Face A, as performed by Player 3
Player 2 imitate Face A, as performed by Player 1
Player 3 imitate Face A, as performed by Player 2
- face X** a face of the performer’s choosing. Should not be neutral, and should seek to convey some sort of emotional content.

Figure 6.2: An excerpt from the performance notes for *This Way Forever*, showing text explanation for the various silent faces made throughout the piece.

These moments of facial-expression imitation occur several times in the work, and often represent suspensions of activity, both in the electronics and instrumental performance components. The sparsity surrounding these moments helps to call attention to the facial

expressions themselves, while also providing a welcome contrast to the busy, fragmented nature of the first half of the piece overall. These imitative behaviors give a unique example of the complex series of references at play in the piece, with the performers often talking about or imitating each other. The fact that these materials were organized by me, and accompanied by electronics which contribute their own identifiable personality furthers the complex series of personal and interpersonal reflections taking place.

By measure sixteen all the categories of behavior have been introduced, and each player has exhibited most kinds of behavior at least once. As such, this point represents a shift, with behaviors becoming much less chaotic, and the primary-instrument references returning. This shift also occurs in the electronics, which become thinner, and less aggressive in m.16. Pages three and four (shown in *figures 6.3* and *6.4* on the pages eighty and eighty-one) feature a sequence where player one produces their instrument case (m.19) and then assembles their flute (mm.23-24, and m.28). These actions are similar to player three's tightening of their bow in m.10-12, in that both are quite basic preparatory actions which correlate to a primary instrument without playing it outright.

Many such "incidental" actions are present in this piece, and the work brings these non-performative actions, which are integral aspects of performers' practice and engagement with their craft, together in a way which is quite literal, and which (hopefully) frames these actions effectively in a performative context. In spite of this context, performers are encouraged to complete these actions in as natural a way as possible, acknowledging of course that this is impossible, since the need to present to an audience, and work within a framework relying on a totally different mindset from normal preparations hinders these efforts considerably. To

whatever extent it is possible to achieve, this natural affect is desirable however, since the juxtaposition between these naturalistic expressions of personal behavior, and the more caricatured aspects of the performance will increasingly be a source of comedic drama in the piece. This difference in affect also gives the identifiable sense that these behaviors are being collected, or “drawn in” from somewhere else.

The interplay between performers and primary instruments is also apparent in player three’s part in mm.16-33. In m.16 player three whistles in the dark, while a light shines on their violin.⁵⁹ The instrument is illuminated again in mm.25-26, and in m.28, both times accompanied by musical samples from the violin repertoire. These samples are pre-selected by player three and either added to the electronics by them, or given to me to add (as was the case for this realization). In our case here, these samples were of Romantic, orchestral violin music, which provided an almost comically “elevated” atmosphere when compared to the frantic and surreal environment which predominates the first half of the work. One imagines that Apter’s concept of diminishment is also at play here in regards to a Western audience’s likely experiences with this kind of material, as well as with the violin itself.

In mm.24-25 a more obvious connection between player three and their violin occurs. In m.24 player three is illuminated with their mouth held agape, while a long violin tone of their choosing (prerecorded by them) plays back in the electronics. When the violin is illuminated in m.25, the aforementioned repertoire samples rejoin the texture, creating a humorous juxtaposition between these materials until both lights go off in the downbeat of m.26. The fact

⁵⁹ Note that in the live documentation attached the violin switch malfunctioned in this bar, so the instrument is not illuminated in the way mentioned here.

that Waniuk recorded quite a noisy tone for this rendition, and selected quite traditional repertoire music creates both a comedic juxtaposition, and a representation of her diverse means of conceptualizing and interacting with her instrument as a performer.⁶⁰ A further source of humor in this section is the banality of player one's visible actions in mm.23-24 and 25-28 (opening their case and assembling their flute) in relation to the dramatic presentations of the violin in the surrounding bars. This contrast again demonstrates a juxtaposition of highly performative, and quite "natural" actions to humorous effect.

Organizationally, many of the behaviors outlined in regards to page one can be seen on pages three and four, with loosely symmetrical structures present on both, and a rather balanced alternation between materials related to player one, and those materials related to player three. These pages also represent a "settling in" relative to the more chaotic nature of the introduction. More unison figures take place, and the players' vocal actions begin to "clump together" more in terms of content. An example of this can be seen in m.31, where each player speaks only the beginning part of an artist bio, with player two reading their own, and players one and three writing bios for one another. In many ways mm.15-32 represent a large unit of material, with player three closing this section in m.32 by rosinning their bow. This action acts as a compliment to mm.10-12 where the bow was tightened.⁶¹

Another surprising shift in materials occurs in m.34, where all three players are

⁶⁰ Also of note is that this decision was the result of Waniuk's sense of humor, and likely of conversations we had about the piece. This kind of interaction demonstrates how many decisions made in regards to *This Way Forever* were quite collaborative, and reflective of multiple interest simultaneously.

⁶¹ See Sample_2.mp4 for an excerpt of these materials. Note that some audio has been removed due to copyright concerns.

illuminated together as player one performs a jig-like rhythm on their pot, while players two and three hold plastic recorders as if about to perform. At the end of this bar, both players inhale suddenly in preparation, but do not actually blow the instruments. Instead, player two and three's lights switch off, while player one's stays on for an extra bar, during which no indication is given for how they should behave. This moment represents both a sudden and surprising one off event, as well as another chance to juxtapose highly performative actions (m.34), with less performative ones (m.35). In this instance, the surreal and surprising behaviors in m.34 create a particularly strong contrast with the unaffected facial expression in m.35.

Between bars thirty-five and forty all players hum a unison rhythm, and play sparse, loud percussion unisons in the dark, with only a self-caricaturing face from player three (m.37) being briefly illuminated. The humming in this section follows a notated rhythm, with performers using pitches from a favorite song to create the melodic material. This kind of behavior represents a simple mingling of composer and performer materials in a way which is quite subsurface but which nonetheless contributes integrally to the outcome of the performance.⁶² Structurally, this moment serves as a “break”, with a relative lull in material density both in the performers' parts, and the electronics. This break allows for an increased focus on the introduction of the trumpet in m.40, where player two produces it from under their table, and sets it in sight of the audience for the first time.

⁶² See sample_3.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.34-42.

3

This Way Forever

The score is divided into three parts for different players:

- plyr.1:** Includes parts for [face A], perc., and Vln. ON. A purple box highlights the Vln. ON section.
- plyr.2:** Includes parts for [face A], bell, pipe + bell down take mallet, and perc. A blue box highlights the perc. section.
- plyr.3:** Includes parts for [face A], whistling, take mallets, and perc. A purple box highlights the Vln. ON section.

Additional performance instructions include:

- place piccolo case on table and open
- as if for a photo [smile]
- subtly unhinged [smile]
- ord. face [karaoke]
- obviously fake [smile]
- pleasent, informative [Sp.] [blo 2]
- pleasent, informative [Sp.] [recipe 3]
- gtr. w/ shift of mallet
- pol
- b.dr-bells
- drone imbae changes

Dynamic markings include *mf*, *f*, and *mp*. Articulation (>) is used for emphasis. The score concludes with a section labeled "see note 3".

Figure 6.3: Page three from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

This Way Forever

The score is divided into four systems:

- System 1 (plyr.1):** Includes parts for [face B], [face C], assemble picc., put down picc. take stick, perc., and assemble fl. Dynamics range from *mf* to *f*. Includes a 'see note 4' label.
- System 2 (plyr.2):** Includes parts for [face B], [face C], perc., and dreamy, still. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. Includes a 'see note 4' label.
- System 3 (plyr.3):** Includes parts for [face B], [face C], perc., and dreamy, still. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. Includes a 'see note 4' label.
- System 4:** Includes parts for b.dr-bells, vin. tone (see note 20), b.dr-bells, and (vin. sample continues). Dynamics include *mf* and *sfz-p*. Includes a 'see note 4' label.

Technical markings include 'ON' and 'OFF' buttons, 'Vln. ON' and 'Vln. OFF' indicators, and various performance instructions like '(W) sharp, quick [pub 3]', '(S) dreamy, still', and '(face forward mouth open)'. Dynamics are marked as *mf*, *f*, and *sfz-p*.

Figure 6.4: Page four from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

Imitative faces return in mm.42-43, with an ensemble unison in m.42, and player three alone in m.43. These two bars demonstrate another clear juxtaposition between traditionally “performative” and “non-performative” actions, with the unison face being highly theatrical, and “mask-like”, while player three’s face in m.43 is to be more “genuine”, and tap into their own typical expressive palate. These moments again serve to highlight the relationship between actions which are “performative” in the context of a piece or theatrical event, and actions which are more accurately described as “performed” in daily life. Together, these actions represent collections of personal material which are in some ways contrasting, but also deeply related through a personal approach.

Measures forty-three to forty-six contain transitional material, with the performers playing a short phrase on percussion instruments in the dark. This playing is reinforced by pre-recorded percussion in the electronics, giving body to the parts played live. The fact that this longer, more traditionally “musical” phrase played on percussion occurs in the dark, mirrors the situation discussed above, where extended vocal materials are performed (largely) in the dark in mm.35-40. In m.47, the performers have the last unison facial expression of the section, looking at one another in a “natural” way, rather than looking at the audience. This change is followed abruptly by a loud and surprising percussion interjection, which begins a new section in mm.50-61.⁶³

⁶³ See sample_4.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.42-50.

This Way Forever

The score is divided into three parts for different players:

- plyr.1:** Includes instructions like "take up whistle", "whistle", "pleasant, informative [liso 2]", "perc. light, dance-like", and "take down".
- plyr.2:** Includes instructions like "take breath", "pleasant, informative [liso 3]", "holding rec. in playing position", "inhale as if about to play rec.", "mallet down", and "take recorder".
- plyr.3:** Includes instructions like "like an informal [lspca 3C]", "rosin bow", "bow down", "mallets down", "take bow + rosin", and "take recorder".

Dynamic markings include *p*, *mf*, and *mp*. The score also features various performance techniques such as "take up", "take down", and "take recorder".

Figure 6.5: Page five from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

This Way Forever

6

plyr.1

plyr.2

plyr.3

4

drone timbre changes

Figure 6.6: Page six from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

The electronics in mm.50-56 introduce an electric guitar figure which becomes prominent in the second half of the piece. Although this material has been “prepared” by the frequent references to guitar, both in the electronics and through the players’ use of toy guitars in the introduction, this riff is still quite stylistically different from what has come before, and to an extent “feels sampled”, even though it is original. The use of this kind of material adds to the eclectic nature of the piece in a way which is authentic to my practice as a multi-instrumentalist, while also being in line with this piece’s theme of surprising shifts and revelations. During these bars the performers are asked to repeat the phrase “I’m having fun”, with various inflections from bored and sarcastic to reassuring or enthusiastic. This kind of unison of spoken material has not been present yet in the piece, and this appearance of new vocal material compliments the musical shift described above in the electronics.

Varied approaches and wild changes in style/instrumentation are frequent aspects of my musical work, and introducing these elements in *This Way Forever* is idiomatic not only of the highly heterogenous nature of the piece, but also of my practice in a larger sense. In many ways, *This Way Forever* is a work which exaggerates these qualities in my music, placing the performers in an almost cartoonishly difficult situation to navigate.⁶⁴ The above-mentioned phrase “I’m having fun” refers to this fact, and although the performers were quite accommodating and we did have a good time with the piece, one can assume (and indeed I don’t have to) that they were *not* always having fun.⁶⁵ In approaching the increasingly surreal and

⁶⁴ As I will mention in the closing remarks in Chapter Seven, I think I probably took this idea too far in the end.

⁶⁵ See sample_5.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.50-58. Note that this video features some editing not present in other samples in an attempt to make player two more visible. Note also that some audio has been removed due to copyright concerns.

unfamiliar tasks the performers are presented with, in[^]set did an excellent job displaying both awkward virtuosity (command over cumbersome tasks) and virtuosic awkwardness (the theatrical ability to lean into these surreal moments and create humor, surprise etc.) With this in mind, the piece relies on the performers' virtuosic ability to navigate the comically surreal situations which have been laid out for them.

Measure fifty-six, in which player two stares ahead “forebodingly” while holding the trumpet in a resting position signals a coming return to the focus on primary instruments, with the frantic and chaotic guitar duet players one and three have on page ten serving as a final interjection from non-primary instruments before this shift occurs.⁶⁶ In m.63 player two continues their “solo” by slowly and dramatically bringing the trumpet to their face, and holding it in playing position as if about to play for a “slightly uncomfortable” amount of time. Just as they take a breath, they are interrupted by an improvised solo of *ordinario* flute playing. This sequence reads as a moment of “composed” situational humor, where an uncomfortably long buildup to an obvious action is suddenly terminated before the culmination of that action.⁶⁷ This sort of behavior has been undertaken before by player two, specifically in m.29, where they take a sharp, illuminated breath before disappearing into the dark, and in m.34 a few bars later, when players two and three both prepare to play the recorder, but don't. At this point, however, since the nature of the piece has been so thoroughly established as avoidant of primary instruments, or traditional “chamber music” aesthetics in general, an interruption from of *ordinario* flute playing is actually a rather surprising event.

⁶⁶ See sample_6.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in m.61

⁶⁷ See sample_7.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.63-73. Note that some audio has been removed due to copyright concerns.

The same sort of humor continues in mm.66-67, where player two interrupts the flute solo with loud, noisy pedal tones, which contrast humorously with the more “traditional” flute materials.⁶⁸ The dark and noisy nature of the electronics here supports a theatrical moment in which player three “looms ominously” over the violin at its table. Ideally, the performer’s move to the table has been obscured, both by the darkness, and by the fact that the other performers are such a strong theatrical focus while player three is changing stations on page eleven. This makes their appearance here rather surprising, with their dramatic affect, coupled with the humorous contrast between the flute and trumpet solos helping to maintain a surreal and humorous environment in this moment.⁶⁹

When player three finally takes their violin in m.68 they play it strummed, with the music suddenly shifting to a light, groovy pop feel. This moment not only contrasts with the preceding trumpet materials, but also with the ways in which the violin has been presented so far, namely on a pedestal supported by samples from WAM repertoire. This humorous reversal serves not only to again emphasize variety and contrast, but also to demonstrate the flexibility of approach that in^set is capable of, both as individuals and as an ensemble. This flexibility is again demonstrated by the accompaniment players one and two provide for this violin playing, which consists of toy guitar and percussion instruments, played in a traditionally musical way which fits into the groove sampled in the electronics.

Theatrically, these bars contain pre-recorded speaking, where each performer was asked to read a few sentences of text about a non-musical topic that interested them. These materials

⁶⁸ This is of course very relative. Traditional in the sense that the flute is playing pitches and rhythms, while the trumpet is playing abrasive noise-based timbres.

⁶⁹ See sample_8.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.65-73.

again present aspects of the performers' (and by extension the ensemble's) personality in quite a direct way, bringing in materials from elsewhere in their lives. The fact that Aguila spoke about light cones, and Waniuk spoke about toning a cyanotype references interests of the performers which are reflected in various aspects of their practice, both in the context of in^set, as well as in other artistic situations. This fact further cements the work as existing self-consciously within, and being referential to a larger lived practice.⁷⁰

The materials from mm.63-80 represent the culmination of the first "arc" of the piece, where performers use largely fragmented vocal and percussion materials as a way of framing a move towards, and eventual use of their primary instruments. The section displays several approaches to primary-instrument performance which are quite idiomatic to in^set, including Díaz's energetic, improvised flute solo in m.64, and Aguila's noise-based playing in mm.65-67. The instrumental materials were written with these specific performers in mind in a way which has interesting implications when one considers the hypothetical possibility that this piece be played again by another ensemble. In a case such as this, the piece would carry a high degree of "in^set DNA" over to this new environment in its musical structure, even though the ensemble would not be directly involved in this hypothetical performance.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See sample_9.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.76-81

⁷¹ It is difficult to speculate further on how this might play out in practice with no practical experience of attempting to perform this piece with anyone else. Although new samples would be selected, and new materials written/recorded by the ensemble, I would not change the structure for future performances, and see this piece as inexorably influenced by in^set as musicians and colleagues.

Structurally, this section of primary-instrumental focus ends with a rupture in mm.81-86, where player one has a short theatrical solo to balance out their earlier instrumental one.⁷² This theatrical moment involves performing a vocal pantomime of a pre-selected sample from AM or FM radio, which is mixed into the electronics and which becomes increasingly noisy and unstable over time. As the music “glitches” so does player one, with their behaviors becoming more erratic until they freeze in m.83, holding an unnatural pose. In mm.84-86 an electrical chime counts down, with the performer suddenly breaking character and posing cheekily, as if for a photograph.⁷³ This moment again represents an obvious break between theatrical states, and makes a quite overt and comical reference to the way people change faces and perform in a number of situations. Using the situation of taking a photo to reference this idea is also quite a surreal bit of humor, where actions which conceptually fit a situation in one sense, but are surprising in another are brought into the musical environment.

⁷² Player two has a similar moment of traditional trumpet improvisation in mm.107-110, which balances out the more theatrical nature of their trumpet solo in this section. Only player three does not have a violin feature later in the piece. This is largely to avoid placing too much focus on the violin overall, since the instrument is featured so heavily on its own in the first section.

⁷³ See sample_10.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.81-86.

This Way Forever 11

System 1: *Senza tempo* (blue box). Annotations: *take flute*, *fl. solo*, *begin loud, frantic, and dense*, *become longer, lower, slower and softer*, *and with pulsing long tones*. **Flute** part with *sf* and *mp* markings. **Click** track: ON.

System 2: Annotations: *as instrument comes into position, increasingly furrow brow, and increase rate + depth of breathing, as if preparing for an intense, frightening, or painful event*, *slowly bring lpt. to playing position w/ both hands*, *keep very still w/ lpt. in playing position*, *take a breath as if preparing to play*, *close eyes, and relax with a serene affect*. Time markers: 5-7 sec., 20-30 sec., 10-15 sec., 5-7 sec., 15-20 sec. **Click** track: OFF.

System 3: Annotations: *move discreetly to violin table stand over violin, looking ahead*. **Click** track: ON.

System 4: Annotations: *head/shoulder/mouth more active = not processed [Excerpt 2B] 20-30R*, *head/shoulder/mouth rhythmically quite active [Excerpt 2C] 15L-10R*. **Click** track: (Click OFF). *mf* and *ff P* markings.

see note 13

Figure 6.7: Page eleven from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

This Way Forever

♩ = 95

12

65

plyr.1

flute down
take gtr.

gtr. strumming

ON OFF ON

OFF ON

65

plyr.2

flubby, abrasive, unpleasant

mf

perc. w/ one hand

mf

take mallet

OFF ON

Vln. ON

suddenly act natural
take vln., and
hold it like a guitar

Sp. cheerful and professional
[feature 3]

mf

stand over violin, still and foreboding

65

plyr.3

vln. strummed

f

(Click OFF)
dirty_bass.wav

(Click ON)
synth_drums.wav

Click

65

4

sf

Figure 6.8: Page twelve from the score for *This Way Forever*. Color coded boxes show the distribution of different kinds of hidden and illuminated materials present. (see key in figure 6.1)

In measure eighty-nine, the guitar riff introduced in mm.50-55 returns, this time as a backdrop for the performers to explore longer vocal and theatrical exercises. The text-writing procedures involved in the creation of these materials are similar to those used earlier in the work, but their presentation in performance is much less fragmentary. In mm.89-93 player three reads off banal personal details like hair color and height etc., while player one joins in mm.91-96 speaking a fast food order that they think player two would enjoy, while player two reads a dramatic excerpt. The presence of longer text interjections here helps to create a sense of “arrival”, and also allows the performers to engage in (somewhat) less frantic performance behaviors.

In mm.97-103 there is a dense, simultaneous deployment of speech, which is in many ways similar to the way simultaneities function in my practice as *Porpitid*. In this moment we are given a vertical alignment of non-fragmented materials, which maintain their identity, but which mingle in ways which alter their intelligibility, creating an amorphous and unpredictable composite. As this spoken material continues, performers are invited (but not compelled) to transition from speaking their lines to singing them. If performers decide to sing, they are asked to improvise vocal lines which fit in with the backing electronics tonally. As each performer finishes their text, they turn their light off, disappearing momentarily as the guitar riff from m.89 fades back in.⁷⁴

When the performers are illuminated again in mm.107-110 players one and three are bowing their guitars noisily, while holding them under the chin like violins, and singing a notated line which doubles my own recorded voice in the electronics. Player two enters here with a

⁷⁴ See sample_11.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.89-101.

“sassy” improvised feature using muted trumpet, and in this moment the ridiculous and surreal non-primary instrument performance displayed by the other players contrasts humorously with the primary-instrument performance displayed by player two. As mentioned above, performers are given opportunities to engage in both roles over the course of the piece, with this fact helping to emphasize the virtuosic nature of the performance, even in these overtly silly moments.⁷⁵

The material on page nineteen serves largely as a transition and a lull in activity both aurally and procedurally in preparation for the final section of the piece, which is quite different from anything else so far. This final section sees each performer preselecting a popular song, which they sing simultaneous karaoke versions of. Player two begins singing, with players three and one joining the texture without regard to key or tempo of one another. This creates a vertical mashup which is quite tonally chaotic, with this chaotic element being reinforced by the fact that singing along with a prerecorded track in such an environment is in and of itself quite difficult, often forcing the performers to improvise and attempt to maintain cohesion in the face of this increasingly overwhelming musical situation.⁷⁶

This incredibly chaotic environment gives way to a final tune in a cheesy and dated “pop” tonal style which again, “feels sampled”, but is original. The performers are given the notated melody to this tune, and asked to improvise around the melody as an instrumental ensemble accompaniment plays in the electronics. This accompaniment was pre-recorded by myself, using an instrumentation of drums (sampled), electric guitar, banjo, electric organ (synthesized) and vocals. Although the accompaniment maintains a consistent style, the

⁷⁵ See sample_12.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.107-111

⁷⁶ Note that due to copyright concerns pages twenty through twenty four have been omitted from the score, and recordings of this section have not been attached.

performers' improvisation becomes noisier, more jagged, and timbrally oriented as it progresses. This style not only juxtaposes in strange ways with the more tonally traditional prerecorded materials, but also represents familiar and "typical" territory for in^set, with the ensemble finishing the piece in a way which is quite free, and celebratory of the ensemble's own idiomatic style, even alongside the heavy presence of my own.⁷⁷

The ending of the work has the performers suddenly turning their lights on and awkwardly pausing for a moment, before ending the piece "non performatively." This could mean looking at one another and beginning to pack up, or otherwise breaking character, but the performers are ideally not to acknowledge the audience until they begin to clap. This ending mirrors the beginning, with the piece being "left open" on the way out. This fact references the continued assimilation of practices and experience which will occur between given performances of the piece, and hints conceptually and performatively at a connection between the lived experiences of the players and the piece. Performance note twenty-four states that after the lights come on "performers are free to improvise the rest of the piece until returning to page one for the next performance. If no further performances are to take place, the performance ends the piece in their own time." Does this performance note "mean anything" in performance? Not necessarily, but it does represent a way of communicating a conceptual package to performers that may or may not have implications for their participation in the work. In many ways this work is about both the subtle and explicit ways in which a musician's "iceberg" of lived experience can affect their practice. The ideas that this piece plays with regarding the contributions of all parties involved (and many parties not involved directly) in the actualization of a given work are true to

⁷⁷ See sample_12.mp4 for an excerpt of the materials in mm.151-173.

some extent in the actualization of any work. What my piece hopes to do is literalize and theatricalize these ideas in a number of ways, which blurs the line between the two, and treats these processes of influence and experience as compositional parameters in a way that is both direct and theatrically communicated.

Closing Remarks on *This Way Forever*

Although the materials in *This Way Forever* are in a sense much more personal than the materials I include in my practice as *Porpitid*, the act of collecting, and the aesthetic of chaotic, lived collections is important in both contexts. *This Way Forever* deals with the idea of collecting experiences and the formation of approaches to both living and music. Part of the “thesis” of *This Way Forever* is that performers form their own specific approach to music through any number of actions, and that this approach is transferrable to a surprising number of disparate contexts. In exploring this idea, materials are brought in from a variety of sources, and performers are presented with a number of environments, giving the piece a quality which again leans into the chaotic and spontaneous qualities of lived experience, through collections of material.

Both my work as *Porpitid* and *This Way Forever* demonstrate different approaches to the concept and aesthetic of the collection as applied to musical practice. In *Porpitid* I aim for a quite direct approach, using structured improvisation based on commercial physical media to explore anachronistic juxtapositions of media materials. In *This Way Forever* there is also a focus on improvisation and indeterminacy, but the collections explored are more of personal practices and ideas, with samples from outside media playing a less prominent role.

In future iterations of notated works like *This Way Forever*, I would like to explore ways to compose situations which rely more directly on improvisation, and which are guided by general frameworks in a way more similar to my practice as *Porpitid*. It can be difficult for me to “compose an approach” for another musician, although certainly text scores like those of Alvin Lucier and the text-based sonic meditations of Pauline Oliveros accomplish this very successfully. Going forward I hope to find ways to convey an approach to collecting and repurposing to other musicians, who can then work with these processes in their own idiomatic ways. This is often difficult for me, because my music has such a strong sense of its own personality, but I am interested in seeing how other performers could engage with these kinds of approaches through their own practice in more freely structured ways.

I think that putting a piece like this together would also address what I feel is the biggest issue with *This Way Forever*, which is the difficulty. This piece requires such a large setup to perform, and the music is so dense that the amount of time required to put it together is impractical for most situations. This difficulty comes largely from the nature of the piece, in

asking performers to play unfamiliar instruments, and engage in theatrical behaviors, but taking a more free, process-oriented approach may still be a fruitful avenue to consider in the future.

In regards to my practice as *Porpitid*, I am hoping to explore ways in which to make this practice less reliant on some of the technologies and systems that it ostensibly professes an avoidance of. Despite the heavy use of hardware processes in my practice, my modern laptop is doing a lot of work behind the scenes, and the materials could not be organized in the ways that they are without the use of this 21st Century device. Primarily, my laptop is used in video rendering and the organization of live sounds, both of which would be impractical on older, slower machines. On some level this approach uses the laptop as a “magic ingredient” that works behind the scenes to make this complex and partially illusory production possible. In some senses I think that a purely hardware-based, live-only way of engaging with this practice would be an exciting thing to explore going forward. Doing this would literalize the ideas of collection, degradation, and limitation I am working with even further, while also divorcing myself from the disembodied technologies this practice presents a lack of interest in.

The largest adjustment in doing this would be the lack of video editing and rendering capabilities, as well as a lack of digital streaming radio. The loss of video editing would make the performance much more difficult to manage live, and involve a drastic increase in the amount of hardware onstage. Since this hardware video equipment is still the primary generator of feedback, and my approach to pre-recording these materials is quite improvisatory I have so far felt largely comfortable offloading this responsibility to my laptop in the moment of live presentation. The fact that this prerecorded approach approximates well a live approach, and makes the practice decidedly easier to perform live is an acceptable trade off for me being able to

comfortably use multiple simultaneous video streams. That being said, perhaps being comfortable is not the point, and in the future I would like to examine ways in which to more fully accept these hardware machines as what they are, and consider more deeply the fact that the accumulation required to do this is either part of the practice or it's not.

The other major consideration in regards to my practice as *Porpitid* is the ways in which the variety of samples used may be expanded in the future to include materials like Spanish-language radio, which I have less lived experience of. In many ways I think the radio is the best way to begin this exploration, as the radio represents quite a public space, where one can access materials which are “offered up” by external curators. Working in this way, however doesn't strip samples of their connotations, and presenting them as an artist from my positionally will have problematic implications no matter how I approach them. In the past I have worked with collaborators from different backgrounds to create works exploring materials with which I am personally unfamiliar. In 2020 Teresa Díaz and I collaborated on a radio collage entitled *Mangled Transmissions*, in which I collected radio samples on my drive to work in north Georgia, and she collected the same during drives along the U.S./Mexican border. Collaborations like this may allow for situations where different cultural experiences and musics can interact in a more authentic way, and it is these sorts of collaborative efforts which I am most interested in exploring in future iterations of this practice.

Taking an approach based around the collection and simultaneous presentation of materials has been an increasingly large part of my practice during my time in graduate school, and I suspect it will continue to be going forward. This way of approaching music is valuable to me because it allows me to access a vast plurality of materials and experiences, which can be

presented in a context which may allow for new kinds of consideration. I hope that by doing this I am able to create music which can connect to wider lived processes, and exist self-consciously as part of a larger fabric of experience.

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