

SHAPE^{ny}

2022 — 2023



SOUND
HETEROGENEOUS
ART AND
PERFORMANCE
IN EUROPE PLUS



SHAPE+ is a new European platform for innovative music and audiovisual art funded by the European Union. Running for three years, SHAPE+ fosters exceptional emerging talent, connecting them to local communities and audiences through collaborative residencies with multiple artistic outcomes, commissioned artworks, as well as one-off presentations and performances. Combining an open call and a curatorial selection, the platform members select a roster of artists to support each year.

SHAPE+ initially consists of 13 partners in 13 countries with plans for further expansion, while adopting an interdisciplinary approach and committing to social and environmental awareness.

SHAPE+ builds upon the previous SHAPE platform, which from 2015 to 2022 supported 336 emerging European artists and presented their work at festivals, events and venues in numerous countries across Europe and beyond.

SHAPE+ member organisations

SHAPE+ platform

Construction
Dnipro, Ukraine
www.constructionfest.com

schiev
Brussels, Belgium
www.schiev.com

CTM
Berlin, Germany
www.ctm-festival.de

Skaņu Mežs
Rīga, Latvia
www.skanumezs.lv

INTONAL
Malmö, Sweden
www.intonalfestival.com

SONICA
Ljubljana, Slovenia
www.sonica.si

Les Siestes Électroniques
Toulouse/Paris, France
www.les-siestes-electroniques.com

Terraforma
Milan, Italy
www.terraforma-festival.com

MeetFactory
Prague, Czech Republic
www.meetfactory.cz

UH Fest
Budapest, Hungary
www.uh.hu

ORF / musikprotokoll
im steirischen herbst
Graz, Austria
www.musikprotokoll.orf.at

Unsound
Kraków, Poland
www.unsound.pl

Rokolectiv
Bucharest, Romania
www.rokolectiv.ro

SHAPE+ supported artists 2022 – 2023

The artist roster has been created without regard to genre, age or popularity. Rather, creative novelty and successful experimentation have served as core values, with additional emphasis on the inclusion of upcoming and underexposed artists and scenes that are often overlooked by promoters or media outlets specialising in music and art.



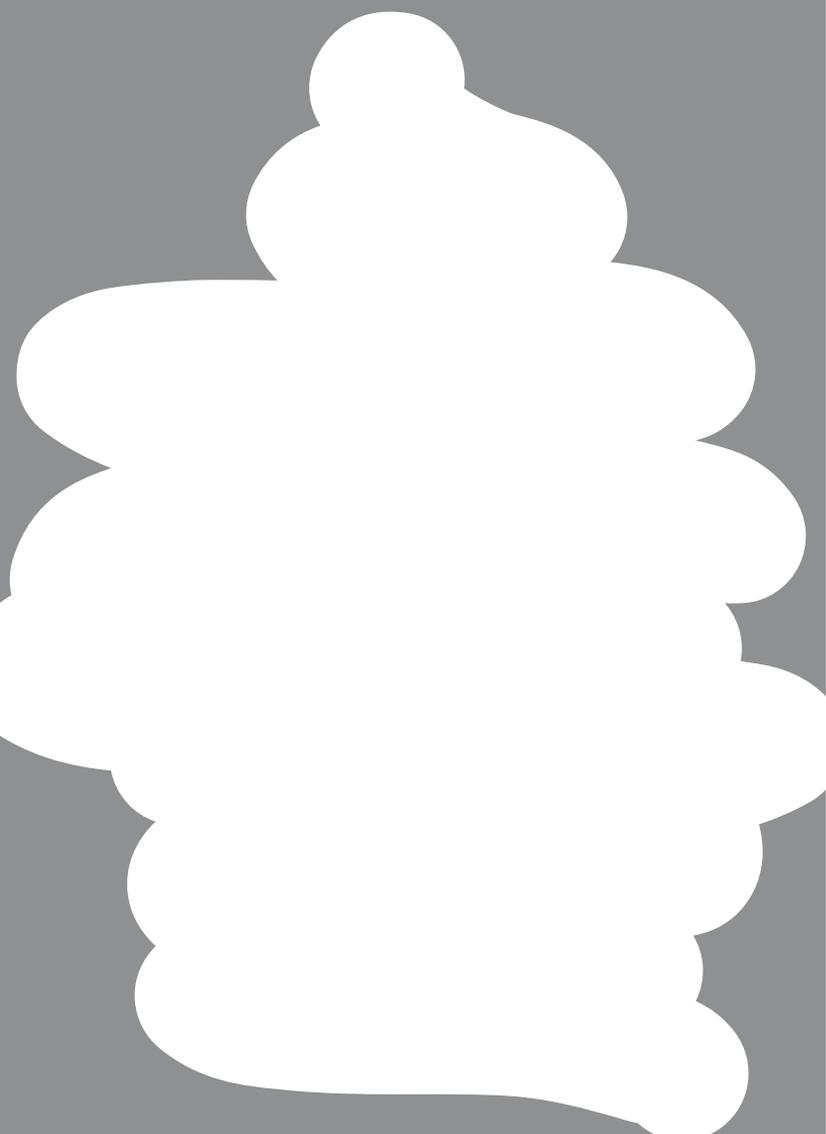
SHAPE+ platform

7777 の天使^{PT}
ABADIR^{EG/DE}
Aho Ssan^{FR}
Ale Hop^{PE/DE}
Aleksandra Bajde^{SI}
Aleksandra Słyż^{PL}
BABAU^{IT}
Bella Báguena^{ES}
Biliana Voutchkova^{BG/DE}
Branimir Štivić^{HR}
Bryozone^{UA}
Eliška Jirsová^{CZ}
Emcsi^{HU}
Esteban de la Torre^{MEX/HU}
Evita Manji^{GR}
Felisha Ledesma^{US/DE}
Forces^{FI}
Franka Marlene Foth^{DE}
Frédéric D. Oberland
& Irena Z. Tomažin^{FR/SI}
Gerard Lebig^{PL}
Gregory Vartian – Foss^{SE}
Heta Bilaletdin^{FI}

Hui Ye ^{CN/AT}
 Isabella Forciniti ^{AT/IT}
 Jaka Berger ^{SI}
 Janan Laubscher ^{DE}
 Judith Hamann ^{AU/DE}
 Kārlis Auziņš ^{LV}
 Katarina Gryvul ^{UA}
 Luis Pestana ^{PT}
 Marina Herlop ^{ES}
 Maryana Klochko ^{UA}
 m.a.t.a.d.a.t.a. ^{LV}
 Maria Bertel ^{DK}
 Mihalis Shammas ^{CY}
 NFNR ^{UA}
 NZIRIA ^{IT}
 Oï Les Ox ^{FR}
 Orsolya Kaincz ^{HU}
 Passepartout Duo ^{IT}
 Perila ^{RU/DE}
 Pisitakun ^{TH/PT}
 Ritvars Garoza ^{LV}
 Rivet ^{SE}

Qow ^{EG/CZ}
 Rehab Hazgui ^{TN}
 Roxane Métayer ^{BE/FR}
 Simona Machovičová ^{SK/CZ}
 Spółdzielnia Muzyczna ^{PL}
 Stefanie Egedy ^{BR/DE}
 Thea Soti ^{HU/SRB/FR}
 The Stanley Maneuver ^{HU}
 Tony Elieh ^{LB/DE}
 Ulla Rauter ^{AT}
 Uršula Berlot ^{SI}
 Ursula Sereghy ^{CZ}
 Vanligt Folk ^{SE}
 Vica Pacheco ^{MX/BE}
 Wojciech Rusin ^{PL}
 Yara Mekawei ^{EG/DE}
 Ying – Hsueh Chen ^{TW/DK}
 Zbigniew Chojnacki ^{PL}

Additional artists are being added throughout the year,
 check shapeplatform.eu for the full list.



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Introduction



by Freddie
Hudson

SHAPE+ platform

It's January, and I'm holding back tears in Berlin. Unusually for the time of year, they're not triggered by a pervasive sense of decay—the un-greenness of the winter world is a dagger to my heart – but rather due to decay's antipodes: the bittersweet flavours of life play out before me as I watch NZIRIA's 'And then a Flame Rumbled Like an Earthquake', a curated performance by the SHAPE+ platform artist for CTM Festival.

NZIRIA is not alone on stage: two dancers intertwine and rebound off each other's nearly visible energetic fields in a synergy that reflects and amplifies the drama in the tender-yet-tough 'Hard Neomelodic' songs, NZIRIA's novel fusion of Hardcore with an heirloom of the Neapolitan region's music culture. I'm clueless as to what the songs are about; love, presumably, and perhaps its rougher edges, given the soulfully pained expressions worn by the performers. The soul of the performance transcends language so profoundly that I'm having a quiet little weep to myself at the back of the concert hall, all alone. There's hardly a better image to summarise the importance of live music, art and performance at the necessary emotional level.

But, I'm ahead of myself, and before NZIRIA's performance finishes replaying in the annals of my mind, let's look further back: although that old adage about rose-tinted retrospect seems to apply itself to the last three years with a little less fervour than previously, and while I'm as tired of talking about the pandemic and the continuity of life in its ruinous wake as you most likely are of reading about it, there's an unignorable pertinence about the impact of COVID –19 on SHAPE platform's evolution into SHAPE+.

Yes, that's right: SHAPE platform is no more; long live SHAPE+, and all that jazz. What began as a three-year test developed into a fully-funded, seven-year demonstration of some of Europe's most notable musicians, a story inextricably linked to a plethora of artists, events, festivals, albums, yet-to-be-heard collaborations and remarkable success stories. The very spice of life to many of us, but, for all that SHAPE gave to the Euro-

pean music community over the past seven years, the necessity for changes to be integrated into the new model was made stark in the afterdays of COVID.

Speaking with two members of SHAPE over email as I readied this text, a summary comment from co-founder Michal Brenner supplies the unofficial motto of the newly-minted SHAPE+: ‘slow down, stay longer, meet people, make connections with the local scene’. Good words to live by. Since relocating to Prague at the onset of COVID’s second tide in late 2020, these words could also sum up my own experiences of the last two-and-a-bit years – certainly, the last phrase does.

I left the UK on the eve of Brexit’s deadline to broaden my own horizons, immerse myself in a very different musical and cultural heritage to my own, and, in my capacity as a music journalist, shed more light on the music emerging from the Czech capital. My home for the last two-and-a-bit years has been an instructive one in regard to certain disparities within the music industry; the urban crucible of Bohemia’s creativity is smaller than London’s melting pot, and different laws apply.

The importance of what I lovingly term ‘satellite cities’ – a sarcastic allusion to those places that, like Prague, suffer in comparison to the apparently more ‘important’ cities of London, Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam, whose greater gravity draws most media attention – has been a striking realisation since I left London, a city that was never really my home. Discussions between myself and musicians or fellow journalists here in Czechia often end on the matter of the blind eye turned to the city (and country at large) by much of electronic music’s incumbent media, yet for all the talks I’ve had there is no common consensus on why Prague-based artists are so rarely given attention relative to those in the English or German capitals. Any who cite a lack of talent are among the most ignorant.

Prague is also the home of SHAPE itself, and so, upon moving here, I found myself in closer proximity

to the actions of the organisation. A healthy amount of the programme’s selected artists are drawn from the pool of talent in this often overlooked city: Evil Medvěď, Oliver Torr, Qow and Ursula Sereghy have been recognised on the list of performers in the last two years, and although the vast majority of SHAPE’s funded activities take place in farther flung locations, irregular fixtures in Prague’s nightlife retain something of SHAPE’s cumulative roster – Canilla and Julek Płoski joined Evil Medvěď for a night at MeetFactory last year, but Evita Manji, Deena Abdelwahed and Jay Glass Dubs made for some of my most memorable evenings in the city.

Free movement between countries is one of the European Union’s most attractive plus-points, one which lends itself very well to the art world: being able to move seamlessly between countries for gigs, art shows and festivals ensures Europe’s artistic heart is always pumping copious creative lifeblood, but the sheer ease can tempt over-travelling – the sword’s double-edge. Although the pandemic stunted so much of that movement, with DJ gigs going all but extinct were it not for predominantly crude online ‘gatherings’, once events tentatively re-summed, the self-same floodgates opened and quickly the industry went, to quote Ruggero Pietromarchi of Terraforma, “back into the old habit”: jam-packed schedules, all-too-brief visits, and carbon-intensive flights between events and festivals partnered with SHAPE.

Michal’s words calling for a slowing down chime with the new modus operandi of SHAPE+, and it goes beyond pressing candidates to take greener travel options: instead of whistle-stop tours and night-long visits to a club, residencies are to be made or developed with the numerous festivals SHAPE partners with. Such residencies aim to provide artists with a chance to sink into the culture of a given city, work with selected local artists, and create a unique product of their temporary environment. I’ve seen the efficacy of such residencies in action in 2022, at SHAPE partner Intonal Festival in Malmö, where Hiro Kone developed a unique performance for a rapt audience

and a full room. There's no doubt in my mind that working in such a way furthers the work of the individual, but also injects inspiration into the bloodstream of a community, all while playing to the innate cultural strengths of the EU.

As a writer and occasional musician/DJ living largely within the tramlines of the music industry, I'm very aware of the encroaching business-ification of the supposedly underground music circuit. Time's arrow is seemingly flying faster, and a great reckoning approaches alongside the looming deadlines for the Paris Agreement's call for net zero emissions by 2050. Still we see musicians, both great and small, leading jetset lives about the continent and even further afield. A great deal of responsibility falls at the feet of identikit 'career goals' made achievable through the connected but independent actions of promoters and agents, in itself no bad thing, but the cumulative imprint is a large one. Taking an active step to reduce the carbon footprint of artists on the roster is an important move in SHAPE+ improving climate accountability while still ensuring that personal and creative movement disseminates musical knowledge and artistic inspiration. It also ensures that the activities of the organisation extend far beyond 'showcasing', and instead supply members of the platform with personal, unique experience: that most important source of inspiration.

As a citizen of the UK, my appreciation for what the EU offers its citizens – even somewhat indirectly, via funding endeavours such as SHAPE – has been renewed since my home country's bitter divorce from it. I can't help but think how things might have been different were we as a nation more concerned with projects of creative unity. Indeed, SHAPE platform's story makes a solid case for cultural funding in the art world, and this is something sorely needed in the UK, with too many vital community projects staring down a brief corridor to closure.

Victories against cultural atavism in the United Kingdom have felt decidedly pyrrhic over the last decade of austere Conservative governance. Widespread cuts are constricting every aspect of life back home, and there's

little sign that this trend will be ended any time soon by the necessary wholesale political shifts away from selfishness, intolerance, and outright hatred. Such stances have been entrenched in our cultural psyche by a lifetime of overt and between-the-lines propaganda, vomited up daily by obstinately contrarian media and individuals who suffer a lack of self-awareness, empathy and compassion.

Such a grim outlook has, for me at least, some remedy in the packed hall of NZIRIA's performance, not just because the performance was made possible through cultural funding but because that cultural funding is being used for artistic endeavours that have self-awareness, empathy and compassion tattooed into its very skin. The dancers involved at NZIRIA's behest, Franka Marlene Foth and Janan Laubscher, represent a new mode of artistically interdisciplinary shows birthed within SHAPE's influence. Aleksandra Szyz is also working on a performance with ballet dancers for Prague's MeetFactory. With the Open Call for SHAPE+ now underway at the time of writing, it's exciting to think what, beyond just music, may emerge from the imaginations of the coming roster.

Following the ley lines of this foreword to their point of confluence, we see a web of social interchange which is the ultimate heart of SHAPE and parallel organisations. Yes, I may be an openly weeping, bleeding-heart lefty, but to these teary eyes of mine such organisations hold the key to ending this unsettling rise of right-wing dogma, the shadow of which lays dark and heavy over the continent. If we can hear more stories, more tender tales of human experience delivered in dialects incomprehensible to us, maybe we can treat our wounded hearts with salves of empathy, and take the routes which lead to brighter futures for all who call Europe, and then the world, home.

Freddie is a music journalist, lecturer, DJ and radio host based in Prague. Their writing has been published by Electronic Sound and Inverted Audio, and they have held panel talks for Gravity Network and SHAPE+.

My year with SHAPE



An Artist Testimonial by Kimyan Law/ Nico Mpunga

SHAPE+ platform

In 2018 I had the luck and honour to be selected as a SHAPE–artist, representing the country of Austria. During that time, I released my second album (*Zawadi*) and was in the process of writing the third one. Being completely new to SHAPE and not having heard of it until that point, I was impressed by the concept and felt excited to be part of it.

And so, the year started, and the first booking flew in.

The ORF musikprotoll im steirischen herbst, which partnered with SHAPE, invited me to perform at Nyege Nyege Festival in Jinja, Uganda. At the time, I had developed a live show of *Zawadi* and this seemed to be the perfect opportunity to perform it. I remember being excited about it the moment I got the request. Being Congolese – Austrian and having had no possibility to travel to my other home country for almost a decade due to ongoing civil wars, it was especially great news hearing I'd be performing on the continent for the first time, and in one of the neighbouring countries of my homeland.

Autumn came and we travelled to Jinja, together with Susanna Niedermayr from SHAPE/OE1. That was the first time for me in Uganda, and the first time in a very long time back on the continent. By the time I arrived at the site, I'd already encountered other SHAPE-artists from all around Europe. Being in this pool of people from everywhere, with similar or related art and professions, was and is a true privilege, I must say; something that doesn't happen every day. The Nyege Nyege Festival was located around the shores of Lake Victoria, the so – called 'source of the Nile'. A natural treasure, and a sight one has to see with one's own eyes. Most of us spent the last part of the day of arrival getting to know each other, recuperating after the days-long journey to get there, and of course, exploring the festival.

I felt very much 'at home' in those surroundings; a feeling I don't have that often in general. Through conversations with new faces, the first performances of some of the SHAPE-artists, and familiar food (at least to me), the first day of an eventful week came to an end.

My year with SHAPE

The next day brought a very serene performance on the bank of the Nile by Tomoko Sauvage, a great artist whom I enjoyed talking to; we had met the day before. The site had lots of different stages, with a multitude of genres, DJs and performers.



Kimyan Law

The night of my performance, I had the pleasure of playing on a Funktion-One sound system on a stage set on hills along the Nile riverbank. The stage was beautifully designed, as was the entire festival. The performance mainly consisted of my second album, *Zawadi*, some potential pieces of the third one, *Yonda*, and a handful from my debut LP, *Coeur Calme*, in a mixture of sticks on drum pads and live FX. I enjoyed playing there, especially to a diverse, lively and open audience, and playing on the continent was and still is, as I've mentioned before, very special to me. Also, being able to witness many great performances and to connect with many great people, with whom I am in contact to this day, was and is a blessing in itself.

After my live show, well into the night, a few of us went to see the most incredible balafon concert on the banks of the Nile. I believe it was the Nakibembe Embaire Group, which comprised at least six to eight balafonists playing simultaneously. The sheer physical vibrations of this instrument and listening to it again being played in real life was very memorable, possi-

SHAPE+ platform

bly my favourite performance at Nyege Nyege.

Susanna Niedermayr conducted an interview about the whole experience with me alongside the moonlit Nile after the balafon performance.

During these days, I was lucky enough to meet the great Stella Chiweshe, a musical legend and treasure, often named the 'Queen of Mbira', Queen of one of the most culturally iconic traditional African instruments. Being a mbira player myself, it simply was an honour to have met her, to have seen her perform, and to have had conversations with her. After the festival, the two of us would spend some more time journeying back to Ethiopia together. Just recently, I learned of her passing, which is a great loss, and a great loss for all of Music. May she rest in peace, Mungu ambariki.

The memories of the people I met, the friends I made, the foleys I recorded, and the performances I was lucky enough to witness, have all stayed with me to this day. I'm grateful for my SHAPE-year, it's simply something I won't ever forget.

If I could give one piece of advice to potential SHAPE – artists, it would be the following: Be open-minded. Be open to new music, be open to new artists, new conversations and ideas. Be open to new connections, to new spaces and new ways to break conventional rules and approaches to making music. Throughout my SHAPE-year, I learned that SHAPE is a platform, a space that contains and connects these aspects.

Mungu ni Mwema.

Blessings,

Nico Kimyan

Kimyan Law is a 2018 SHAPE artist, based in Vienna, Austria. Having explored electronic music since the age of 12, deep explorations into his African roots have led him to create complex mosaics of ancient sound with modern aesthetics.

Padding to the end



An essay by
Simina Oprescu

SHAPE+ platform

play The Magic Yard—Luboš Fišer

I need to write this with humour and irony to cope and find balance. I will write it as if it had a soundtrack, we are in a disco ballroom, and there is a questionable retro robot DJ playing discs in a weird order, with awkward silences in between.

play the Twin Peaks theme

I was selected to be a SHAPE artist for a year, proposed by Thomas Dumke, director of the CYNERTART festival. A platform and space that offers a great deal of support and exposure for underground or unknown artists. For me, it was to be a year when I was supposed to **keep the wave**. Maintaining professional development, making new connections, meeting people from your field, travelling, and live performances are supposed to be the primary focus. Well, little did we know, as we raised our glasses at the 2020 NYE parties, whooping and rushing to sip the extra foamy bubbles for a fresh new start, kissing each other, laughing – that all this would blow up right in our faces and would disinfect that very glass until it turned to sand.

The German term *Dasein* found in Heidegger's philosophy has a complex meaning of 'being there' or, simply put, it is understood as 'presence'. It is as if this presence controls you more than you control it, it surrounds you. From that year onwards, it felt like having this presence and shadow constantly in the background. It was a *Dasein* shock from which I am still recovering, somehow. If I look back, I feel as if I had constant panic attacks between meals, worked non-stop to distract myself from whatever was happening, and saw how everything surrounding me was falling in slow motion, a feeling that sadly didn't disappear, but only intensified.

play Saez—Pilule

Luckily, I had several commissioned projects, so financially I didn't struggle that much, which helped me a lot, but it was absurd how, emotionally, everything was stretched

to the maximum, breaking, itching, and falling. The whole expectation of what the SHAPE year was supposed to look like fell apart. It's funny that I'm scrolling through emails from 2020 to remember exactly what happened because there was a trauma response: work and forget. Enthusiasm was replaced by anxiety, and travelling was replaced by masks, washing hands, disinfectant, and staying home crying under the shower in a foetal position. We were supposed to have an exciting meeting in Switzerland with everyone involved, from festival directors to artists, but in the end, it never happened; we had it online. Later on in the year, we all got used to Zoom meetings, but at first glance, this medium and lack of human interaction, which had been replaced by a screen and a mic, was a peculiar and new situation for me. I already sat in front of the computer a lot, and like most of us working with tech or media, what I didn't need was even more screen time. It was partly a comfortable, part a Kafkaian cockroach situation. I had to adapt, and I had to do it fast.

play a 90s Romanian song, Madalina Manole—Fata Draga

I lived in Bucharest at that time, in the Titan neighbourhood, on the second floor of my grandparents' small socialist apartment. I was living in one room, which was my bedroom studio. If I looked out of the window to the left, I could see all my neighbours' apartments and know all the babushkas, so I felt as if I was living in a scene from *Rear Window*. The fun and sad part is that I knew everything about the neighbours who shared a party wall with my room. That was their kitchen; they hated my sound, and I loathed their impossibly loud voices. So it became a through-the-wall-fight at some point, with passive-aggressive messages saying "YOU HAVE NO TALENT" stuck on my door, and call-outs; that was a pandemic peak for sure. But then I had the great surprise that my "KI 03" track was selected to be part of the CD compilation *Below the Radar*, which is made yearly by The Wire magazine with selected SHAPE artists that apply to be part of this compilation.

play Sparks—The Girl Is Crying In Her Latte—and with this, seems to be having a mental breakdown

Physically, I was within the same perimeter for weeks and months, but psychologically, I had this great tool to explore and go crazy with. I had a whole home that presumably could produce sound, and every room could have a certain tone or composition attached to it. I was on a movie set and I had to direct each thought to create **The Hidden Environment / The Feeling of the Cave**, a commissioned, 50-minute radio drama for musikprotokoll. Furthermore, I had great communication over Zoom with Elizabeth Zimmermann; I am grateful for her openness. I even set up a 'wood percussion wardrobe', which I showed on the Instagram take-over (which happens when the SHAPE artist comes to be Artist of the Week) where I hung from the inside bar pots, spoons, rain sticks, bells, etc.-whatever tools I found digging around the house-then positioned them and recorded inside the wardrobe. Great acoustics, he-he, and also a great setup for recording in case of a lack of ideas. Every wooden box out there is great acoustic material.

play Murder Capital—The Stars Will Leave Their Stage

Imagination simply became a coping tool after some days in the same space. Sometimes, I had a comforting cocoon feeling when I remembered that the entire world had stopped. It also involved wild solitary dancing, which I will get back to. I mean, you need to escape somehow, and most of us were lucky enough to be able to escape through the universe of sound. Pure therapy. After I had a massive flood in this old, unmaintained apartment where I grew up as a child, filled with history and memories, where every little corner has a meaning-I became a different person. A kitchen water pipe burst, releasing cold water with incredible force. The feeling was complex; it was the beginning of May, and I was out for the first time in a week. I was alone and was going through a serious breakup, and I received a concerned call from the building

manager saying that the neighbours had water pouring down their walls. I went weak at the knees and I hurried home. When you are faced with this kind of hell-let-loose of an emergency, you need to think fast and with zero emotions. The first thing is that everything electric needs to be switched off. I was stupidly sitting with my bare ankles covered in water, with a sparking electric plug with water inside in my right hand, trying to unplug it with my left hand fast enough so that 1 mm of water wouldn't get into the electric panel mount in the wall and destroy the entire electrical system of the apartment, with all the gear still plugged in. And me dying from electrocution through having my naked feet in the water, and no one to help me because there is a global pandemic and lockdown.

play UnicaZürn—For the Dark Planets

After that, I closed myself in. I began to read a lot about psychoacoustics, living in my bubble and not reaching out to anyone. I had my family's medical books on neuroscience and brain chemistry and great research material, and there I found out about the vagus nerve, the 'trauma nerve', and that the impulse to chant, whistle, or hum in distressing situations comes instinctively and helps to heal. Or bilateral stimulation-both in sound-as an effect, or physically-by tapping one's hands on one's knees. Then I arrived at proprioception and how some movements trigger a shaped idea of travelling sound. So it was a full-on research year, experimenting with these concepts regarding the musicality of form and the psychoacoustic environments of sound. SONICA festival started and was the theme of *Paradise Hunted Garden*, a hybrid group installation/exhibition, exhibited at Galleria Eburna. I was working again with Martin Bricelj Baraga, director of the SONICA festival and the MoTA Museum; we knew each other from 2019 when I played at Kino Siška. I remember talking on the phone with Martin to understand how I would imagine a multichannel installation without being able to hear it in the space. Likewise, I had the same discussion with Thomas Dumke, director of the Cynetart Festival. There was also a quadraphonic environment with

The Hidden Environment / The Feeling of the Cave that I proposed, and I talked with the technician about how it should be set up. It was such an irony that I didn't get out of the house in weeks, but I was talking about spatialisation over the phone. Ludus's soundtrack, which was an AV work, was to be played in SONICA's festival garden, where I did work under the umbrella of my research form/rhythm, inspired by the history of the hopscotch game, with 20 differently shaped hopscotches found in different countries, which I played wearing tap shoes. The outcome was the distinctive rhythm pattern of each one of them.

Because of the pandemic and lockdown situations, some countries were more in lockdown than others, and it was very difficult to facilitate travelling, so a lot of live performers switched to commissioned works or AV. Another project that was a fun experience was with the Rokolektiv festival, my hometown festival, which had as their theme *Earthly Soundtracks for the Nonhuman*, and they asked for an AV commission. I made *Sulphurus Formicidae*, imagining a sci-fi scenario in which gigantic ants were doing a hybrid nuptial flight, busting the colony's genetic variability to save our planet. I am still fascinated by their perfectly choreographed movements and how they communicate and have a very clear path of language.



*play *Deutsche Angst*—Lawrence Weiner*

During the pandemic, a phenomenon of silence happened, and for this, I am thankful because it facilitated flowing thinking and listening without fragmentation. Besides hearing ambulance sirens. If you have visited Bucharest at some point, you know that it is generally a noisy place. Commotion, the honking of horns, and short tempers. Now, finally, the birds and crickets were the loudest. This helped me concentrate and research different techniques of recording, listening, and editing. For example, the siren sound will not only carry a very clear sound signal but will also hold an emotion or a meaning attached to it, maybe fear or goosebumps, danger, or attention. Or a sound mark is absorbed subconsciously from a known place, let's say a cowbell ringing somewhere far away in the countryside. The listener not only hears the sound mark but also translates and triggers a memory, simultaneously inducing a multisensorial experience even though they are far away. The insect sounds heard, such as crickets, bees, or flies, may induce, when the eyes are closed, the feeling of a warm place, or they can be used to induce anxiety – or give a form of expectation that soon something might happen. The human psyche has a deep need to link sounds with something familiar, either fictionally or virtually. It is more inclined toward the listening and recognition of familiar sounds. I recognised a certain link around this subject of necessity and I got a bit intense because I kind of had this epiphany when locked up in my room, an Alvin Lucier moment. This necessity comes with a form, be it physical or just an imaginary object. But the physicality of an object, the interaction with it, is what attracts the most. For example, I find myself in a certain space and I hear the sound of my rubber ball that I just threw; that space becomes all of a sudden an 'object' because I am inside it, and becomes a participatory act. The ball activates an articulation of sound in the space and so, it becomes a place of my interaction. Or I am sitting on a bench under a branching tree, calmly observing the surroundings, and suddenly I hear the song of a blackbird. That bench and space transform into a vehicle

that transports a certain memory from childhood, similar to déjà vu; the bench and the tree are suddenly part of my mental place, triggered by the blackbird's song. Hundreds of people probably feel and hear exactly like me and find a specific linking familiarity in such simple alternations of tones. For example, a recording of a blackbird combined with the virtual texture of a modular synth, created a new hyperreality, combining the known with the unknown. This created 'object' is related to our perception of space and time, and this matter is linked to our sole experience.

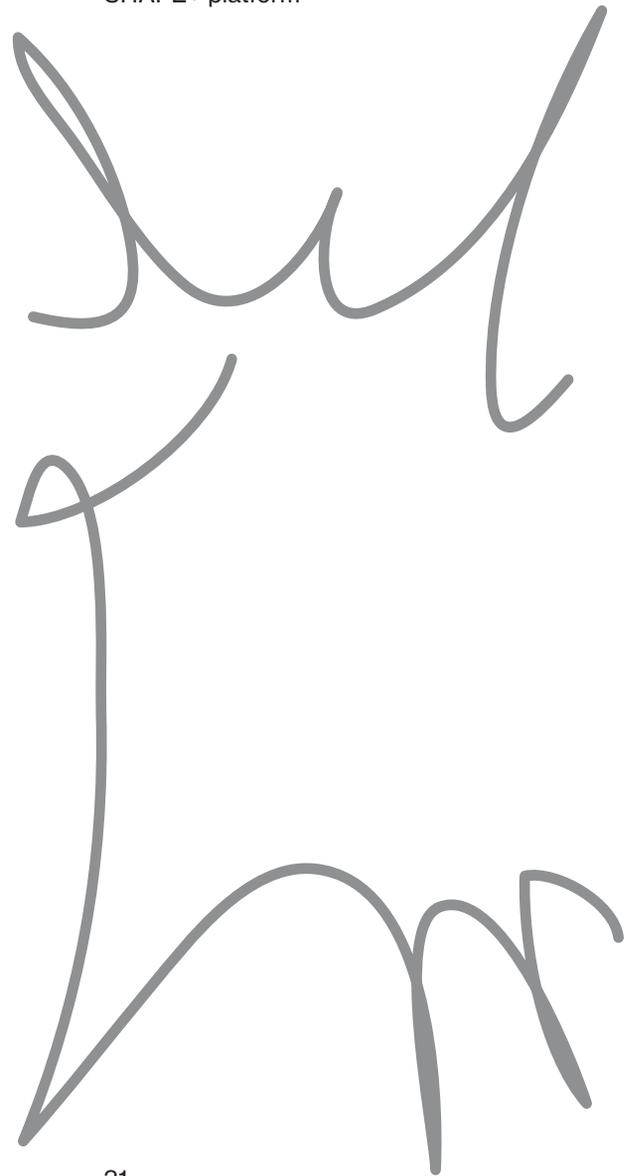
Pauline Oliveros referred to two modes of listening, a duality: "...what is heard is changed by listening and changes the listener. I call this the 'listening effect' or how we process what we hear. Two modes of listening are available-focal and global. When both modes are utilized and balanced, there is a connection with all that there is. Focal listening garners detail from any sound, and global listening brings expansion through the whole field of sound." Returning to *Dasein*, this multi-state of presence, in this case, the silence was a presence of listening and recording, found in the duality of space and place. External space, such as in gardens, parks, birds, traffic sounds, electromagnetic fields of the city, people, etc.; and internal place, metaphorically pictured as bubbling rhythmical or streaming water, the sound of the wind howling through a semi-opened window, or the ambiance of being crushed by a racing car on a rainy day, the hooting of a train or a motorcycle honk. Then the listener has a moment of pause before recollecting the thought order after the loudness. This micro-second crash-whoosh-jvhoom-whoom-that passed by-might be linked with the rapidity that brings back a cyclical pattern in the mind, which keeps on repeating.

From my personal experience of composing and mixing, I tend to search for a universal feeling of dichotomy, an existential awareness that humans experience sooner or later. And it goes from maximal to minimal. As Timothy Morton pointed out in his *All Art is Ecological*, "sometimes things are present when they stick out or

malfunction”, when they are either loud or too quiet, rapidly disturbed by a loud worksite sound or a high-pitched scream-right through your speakers. So, what we experience in this remarkably similar, but very different perception of reality are these ‘codes’ that we store in our subconscious. These are recognisable signals that we choose to record and archive in an exhaustive desire to become understandable. And I think that what we lived is a very different experience to what the world looks like now. Coming out of this ‘hold-your-discipline-even-in-a-pandemic’ state created a sort of boredom regarding linear stereo environments and more curiosity about the shape of a minimal sound inside a noisy space when a maximal one exploded inside a minimal space.

If I have to advise the next SHAPE+ artists it would be to have fun while doing it, and I recommend having some clear ideas about where one would like to focus as it helps to have a starting point.

Simina Oprescu is a 2020 SHAPE artist. She is a composer and sound artist currently based in Berlin, Germany. She creates strong yet sensitive narratives around actively explored concepts inspired by spatial arts, psychoacoustics, and sculptural installations that involve a philosophy of participation, movement, and gesture.



Touching sound



Behind the curtain of the musical—dance residency of Aleksandra Słyż

SHAPE+ platform

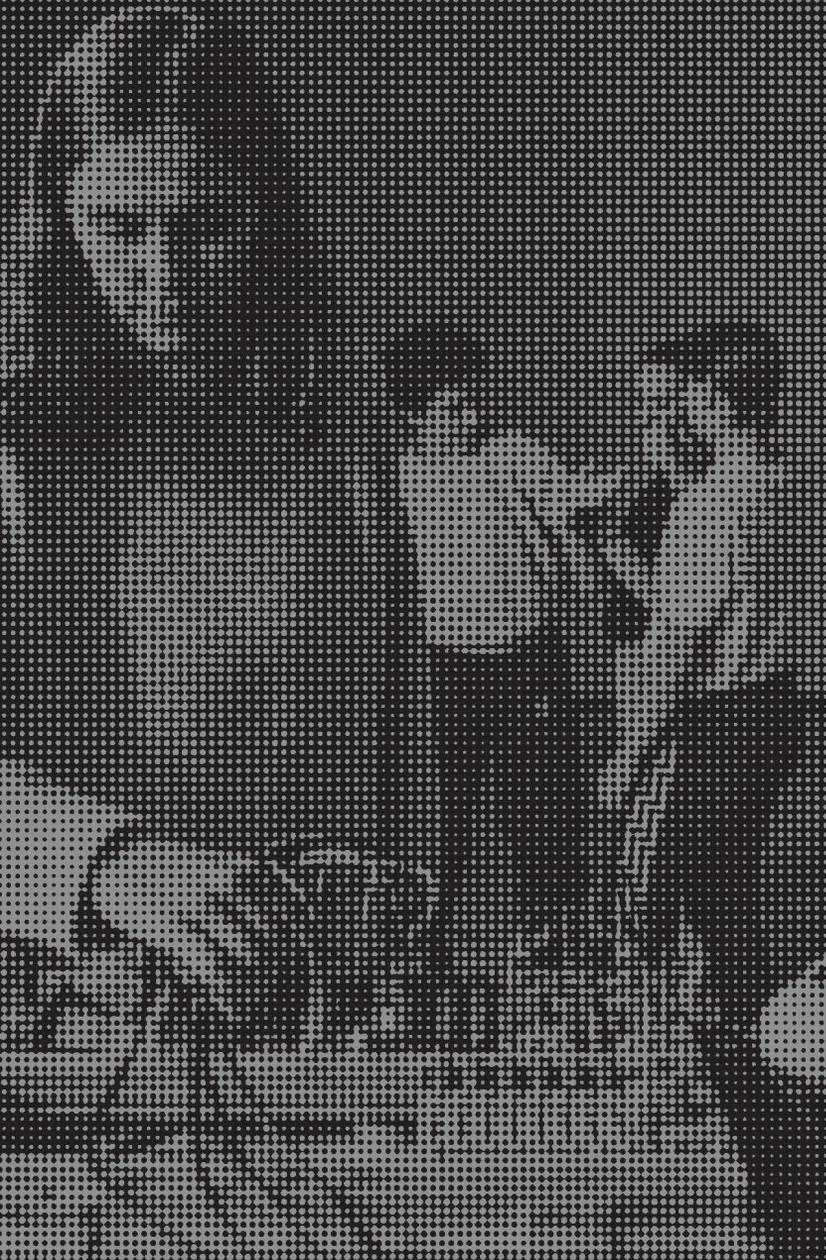
When I arrive at Prague's MeetFactory, the building is bathed in chilly March sunlight. I can't remember ever being here in the morning. It's as silent as the grave. Hidden on the usually inaccessible first floor of the former factory I find a studio with a makeshift dance floor. I get to know sound artist Aleksandra Słyż, who has come here for a two-week artist residency supported by the platform SHAPE+. The residency will culminate in two performances in June: one on the 12th here at MeetFactory and another two days later at Pawilon in Poznań, Poland.

I'm welcomed by Max Dvořák from SHAPE+, who explains the collaboration with the factory space in Prague's Smichov neighbourhood: "MeetFactory is one of the thirteen partner organisations that make up the international music platform SHAPE+ and is the main coordinator of its activities. This is the eighth year of this European collaboration of artists, and this year, for the first time, MeetFactory is hosting two residencies, of which a total of twenty-six will be taking place in 13 countries. But in a different way, it fits into the local residency programme for visual artists here, which is now in its 16th year and invites artists from all over the world. Our goal is to facilitate collaboration between international artists and local ones."

Aleksandra Słyż's project focuses on the development of interactive sonification systems. Since 2017, she has been conducting artistic research involving the use of practical experiments with the sonification of movement, gestures, human proprioceptive reflexes, and various other types of interactions. In the scope of the SHAPE+ residency, she was able to invite other artists to collaborate, and her invitation was accepted by choreographer Anna Kokocińska, visual artist Maks Posio, and two dancers from the Prague-based group 420PEOPLE, Eliška Jirsová and Simona Machovičová.

AN AUDIOVISUAL MOVEMENT EXPERIMENT

For the first few moments, I don't realise what I'm witnessing. It all looks like an ordinary contempo-



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rary dance set to electroacoustic meditative music. However, I am suspicious of the performers' uncanny synchronisation with the music, and the luminous bracelets on their arms raise further questions.

Musician Aleksandra Słyż gradually draws me into the technological backstage of the project. On the work table there are lots of cables and boxes, a computer, and four bracelets with sensors. The ones on the dancers' arms use accelerometers and magnetometers, collecting movement data based on the principle of a gyroscope and sending it wirelessly to a laptop where, using a specially developed programme, they manipulate the base layer of sound. Słyż demonstrates by waving her hand in front of me with the sensor. As she slowly moves her hand, timbre and dynamics shape the original sound—the base layer of the composition. I begin to understand that the entire composition arises simultaneously in real time—the movement creates the music in close conjunction.

Słyż has been working with sensors for seven years and has already realised several similar performances. For this project, she has joined forces with choreographer and eurhythmics teacher Anna Kokocińska, who taught Słyż movement improvisation at university. Kokocińska saw performances using similar sensors during her studies in Stockholm and was tempted to try them out, and a few years later, she approached her former student to work on a project together.

“I'm inspired by the theme of so-called primal rituals. Through this project, we are trying to discover the human bodily heritage—to figure out how the first human beings used the body to express themselves, to interact with each other, to communicate. For us, this means a close collaboration between everyone involved, in which we find and highlight natural bodily processes and use them to influence the music. In the beginning, Anna, Maks, and I discussed this topic a lot and shared what we were interested in. Together we came up with the concept of original rituals.” Słyż takes on the role of conductor in

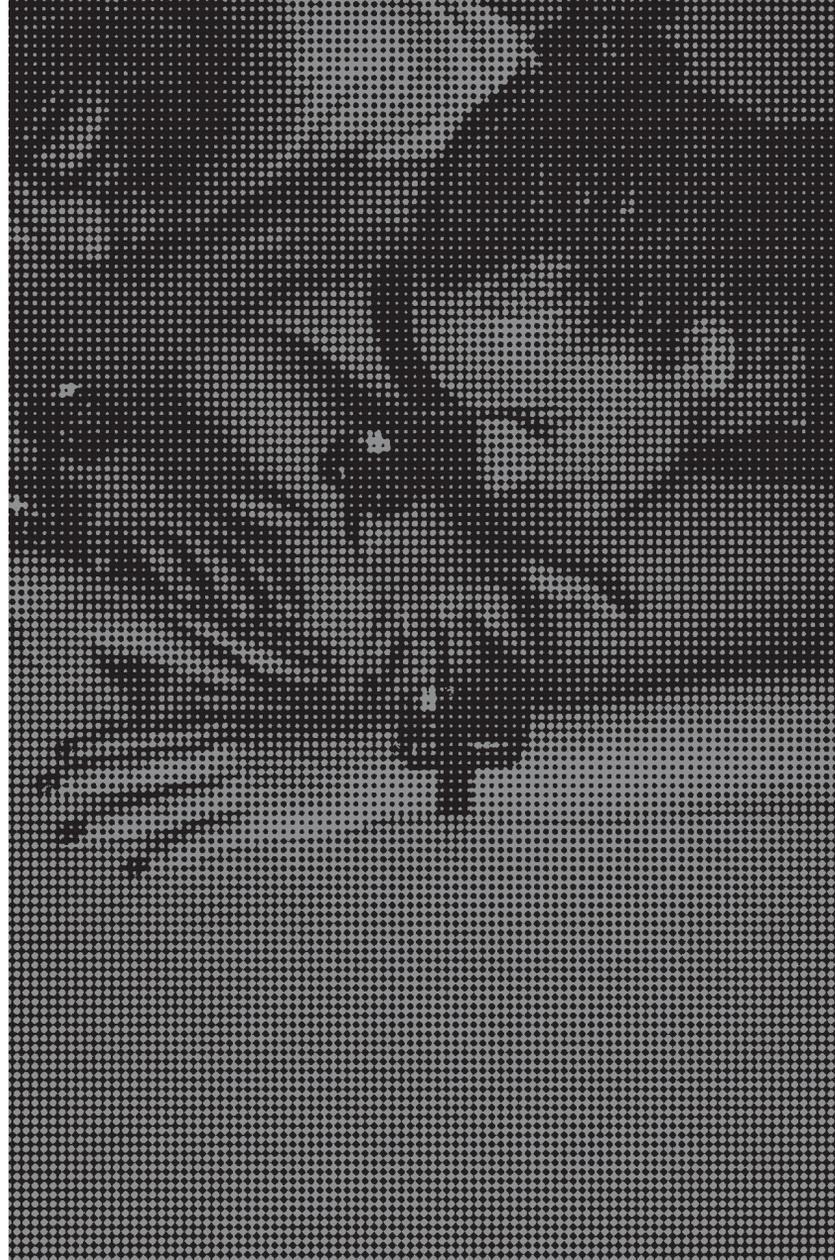
Touching sound

order to exercise her own aesthetic expression, which in her interpretation tends above all toward slowness. Long-held notes and harmonies in which time stretches out into infinity are typical of her work. Perhaps this is why abrupt movements are interpreted by the program as unpleasant sounds. The conductor thus deliberately slows down the dancers' movement, and they learn to move only gracefully, smoothly, and slowly because quick movements correspond to the strike of a harsh sound. The dancers ascertain which movements create harmonious sounds and vibrations that are pleasing to the ear and body. Within this frame, the final work is created with the input of all of the artists together. Ten intense days of training have to suffice to get the performers in tune with the principles of generative music and data sonification.

TO FEEL ONE'S OWN BODY AND CREATE MUSIC WITH IT

The base layer of the electroacoustic recording is the processed sound of a cello. The dancers manipulate the recording by moving the sensors on their arms, resulting in a convincing choreography for an electroacoustic symphony. The artificial intelligence bracelets on their wrists have given the dancers supernatural powers, but they must learn to control this technology. "We don't want the technology to control us. We want to explore how best to use it. We don't want to lose control, nor should we ever sacrifice our self-expression to technology. In my work, I seek the perfect balance between progress, technology, and artistic value," explains Słyż.

Dance and music usually have a clear hierarchy for us. We dance to music. Music can inspire and provoke, but we almost always understand it as an initiation or accompaniment to dance. In this project it is the opposite. The movement is detected by sensors, which wirelessly send coordinates to the computer. The coordinates are assigned certain programmed values, which then change the base layer of the soundtrack, creating a new, multi-layered composition. Słyż is already accustomed to motion





SHAPE+ platform

capture tools, but the dancers find themselves in a new reality. Although all of the dancers have experience with unconventional movement, the collaboration with Aleksandra Słyż opens the door to a hitherto unknown creative process. “It was a challenge for me. I had to become aware of the movement of my entire body again. In the beginning, I was thoroughly focused on the hand with the sensor, and the rest of my body was hardly moving. It’s like learning to drive a car—at first there are a lot of new functions that a new driver has to focus on. I was looking for new ways to use my body and the sensor in a natural symbiosis,” says Kokocińska, recalling the reality of the last two weeks. One of the other dancers nods in agreement. “When I dance, I usually move dynamically and quickly. But that doesn’t create nice sounds here. I had to find a new way of moving. Plus, the box itself physically limits my wrist in some positions, like when I want to work on the floor with my hands. At first, I was constantly directing myself and searching for the range of motion. On the other hand, now when I remove the sensor and switch from the role of the music creator back to the standard mode, it’s like coming down to the ground after jumping on a trampoline,” laughs Eliška Jirsová.

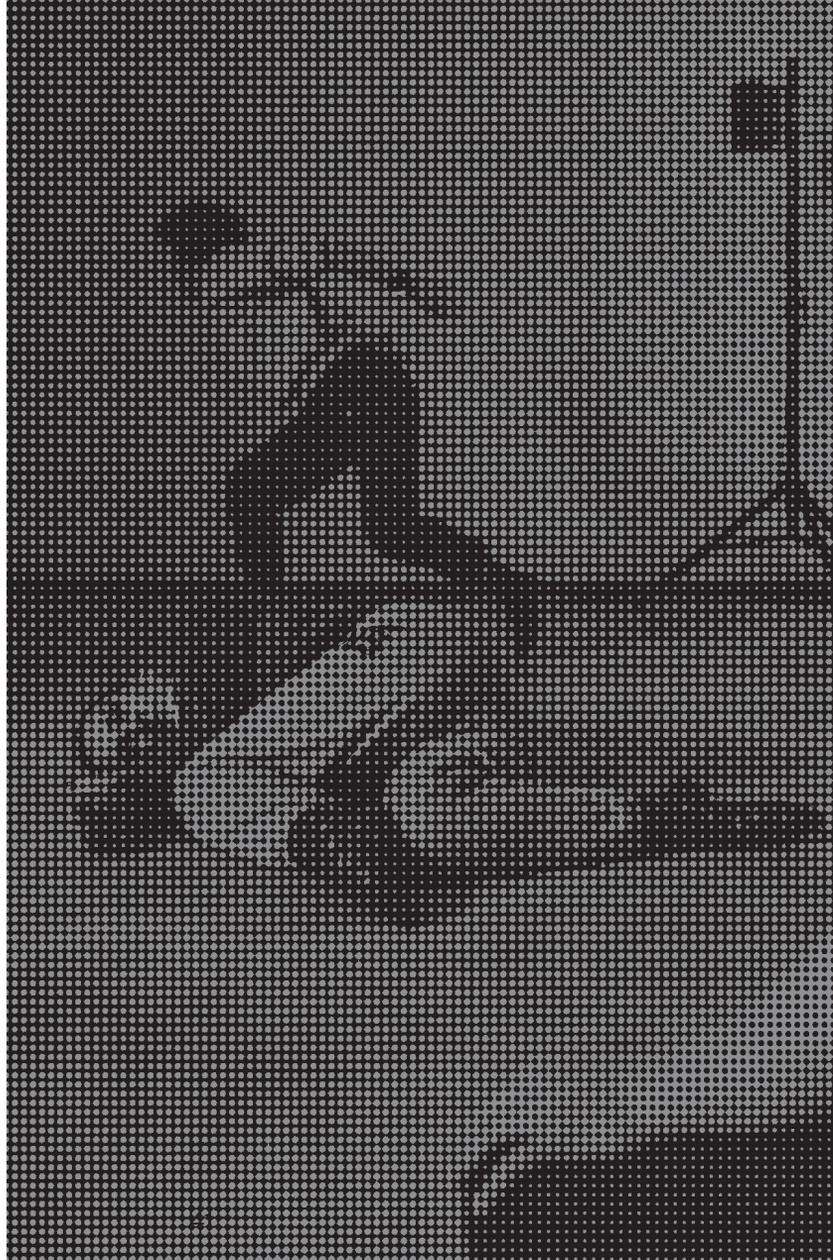
Instead of playing instruments, the performers play coordinates in space. They co-create the music by dancing. They have to orient themselves in a complex environment of several dimensions: movement-space-sound. The basic effects are programmed in advance, and the performance is created spontaneously, often with improvised movements. The choreography is not fixed. The dancers are ‘merely’ synchronised: they perceive and react to each other, communicating with their own movements and gestures. All of this is inscribed into the resulting music. “You’re used to improvising freely, and then all of a sudden you have this small thing on your wrist, and you start concentrating on making music. I felt completely disconnected from the rest of my body. I was only focused on my hand. It was also disconcerting when I didn’t hear the expected audio response to my movement, and I felt disconnected from the sensor as well. Over time,

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I got used to all of this. And one other thing is different: for me, music is an inspiration to dance, but here it's the other way around-I create the music," says Simona Machovičová, the second dancer from 420PEOPLE.

After the two-week residency, a solid foundation for the final performance seems to be in place. The whole team will meet again for the final rehearsals just before the premiere in June, but until then only the three Polish members will continue working on the project. They will refine the piece with additional programmed codes of tonal ranges and connections between tones and their transitions, and they will also enrich the composition with a visual component that will similarly react to the gyroscopic sensors. We will soon have the opportunity to experience, with all of our senses, this multi-layered project full of video-acoustic responses to movement.

Text: Miharū Micha, Full Moon Magazine
Photos: Mária Karľaková





How do you
play a city?

An interview
with Yara
Mekawei

How do you play a city?

The sonic bricolages of prolific artist and scholar Mekawei draw inspiration from the dynamic flow of urban centres and the key infrastructure of cities. Interested in the philosophy of architecture, social history, and philosophical literature, Mekawei implements an optical transaction on a musical conversation and transforms sound waves into visual forms. Her work is based on sound as an essential tool of vision, and the philosophy of its composition is shaped by sophisticated practices that express its conceptual dimension to the public.

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You are interested in sound and architecture. I'm curious about how you perceive the city sonically. In every city you do field recordings—do you think that every city has a very specific sonic signature or sonic identity?

It's kind of like sonic fingerprints for each city, each district as well. For example, I've been quite familiar with Berlin for a long time and each district has a special atmosphere. There are differences between the seasons, tourist and residential areas, shopping centres, the traffic. There are common points – the noise of the people talking in the street and how the architecture and the infrastructure of the city amplify the sound or host the sound. However, on another level, there are different languages, different slang, different kinds of dialogue.

Do you feel that issues like gentrification are changing cities in terms of their sound?

The dynamic of a city depends on several things, like the season, immigration, the social and economic situation, etc, and that influences the soundscape, too.

There's also a lot of discussion about how affluent people want silence where they live, they don't want any sort of sound pollution. So it's also an economic question.

Yes. And this is also one of the points in my study, not only in Berlin, but in many cities that I travel through, or even in Cairo, I mean, as you said, rich people would like to avoid the crowds, would like to avoid the public. And they would like to stay apart in compounds, which also have a different type of noise, by the way.

How do you sonically translate this research in these urban centres, with all their complex stories and histories?

I have used various ways to present the field records, but a long time ago, I would make field records in the buildings in urban centres, of the frequency of the concrete of each building.

What was really interesting for me was to observe the buildings and the architecture in each district as elements

How do you play a city?

amplifying sound. It's like a mic and a speaker, in a different way. Each building hosts a lot of sounds made by the people who work and live there. The building itself, its construction, the concrete, the ceiling, each have different types of sound frequency. It's a dialogue between people, streets, and buildings, which are like big speakers that speak to each other.

And how do you approach your work practically – what does your field work and the preparation look like?

Actually, it depends. Sometimes I spend a month in a city, for example, in November I was at a residency in Malta. It takes me three weeks to understand a city – mentally and sonically – before I start recording. After Malta, I was on tour in Istanbul. I only spent two weeks there, but I knew exactly what I wanted to record. Based on my Sufi research, I focused on the mosque, the church, and the call for prayer.

Are there any places that have surprised you so far?

Malta was a massive surprise for me. In many neighbourhoods and districts you cannot hear the local language, which really surprised me. It is weird when you go to a city and you don't hear the local language. There's a big gap between the original residents and tourists and others who came to live there. I was working in Sicily and there was no one that spoke English, and that was fine for me.

I guess it's also hard because you also don't want to be like a voyeur. The question of the ethics of recording and field recording is a complex one. How do you work with field recordings that have recognisable voices on them?

I ask before I record. I'm a sound collector. I don't have a camera like a tourist; I just have my recorder. I like to collect sounds. It's a friendly way of seeing people; they may not have a common language, but they have a common sound. I'm from Cairo, and since the revolution, it has become so hard to walk in the city with a recorder and ask people to say something

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unless you know them personally. Especially recently, I've worked on many projects that incorporated work with an open mic. Also with radio live broadcasting, it's a big question what and how to stream and capture. For me, it's really important to have permission.

What interests you about a place before you go and record there?

In the last two years, I've worked with artists from Leipzig on a research project about socialist architecture. It was really interesting for me to discover the social architecture and the social urban designs of East Germany and compare them to social housing in Cairo. Two years of discovering different types of architecture and how they affect the neighbourhoods: their history and the future. Another perspective is language. My Sufi research is also about language, love, God and the prophets, philosophers.

I was also wondering about your album titles because they're all numbers or years.

I sometimes compose music based on numbers, their coding. For me, numbers are neutral. You don't have any emotions, feelings. You just have to listen and remember, understand. I don't want to give those really nice romantic titles to my albums.

When you work on your music, do you have an audience in mind and how they will receive and perceive your sounds?

That is a really good question. It takes a long time to produce the pieces. When people listen online, it's hard to get feedback from them. People come and talk to me after my live sets. They ask about the story behind my compositions. I'm using religious texts, voice-overs. The audience cares, and listens. And I feel that this kind of 'analogue' relation to the listeners is really important.

Does the feedback from the audience/listeners influence you when you work on a new project?

Yes, totally. After my third album, I started to do

How do you play a city?



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listening sessions. I pick tracks I'm working on and share them with the audience. Sometimes these are online – reading and listening sessions.

Listening as a communal activity. I also wanted to ask about the aspects of cultural identity and feminism in your work.

In my region, it's tricky for a woman, a Muslim Egyptian in the MENA region, to play sound. There's the geopolitical situation, too. It also pertains to my Sufi research, which works with religious texts, connecting not only Islam, but also Christianity and Judaism. You can listen to my work and hear the female voice interpreting the male text. A female voice reading a religious text. All these things are under my skin; I cannot run away from them.

It is hard to break through the male dominance in these realms, and this is global, to an extent.

I agree. Now I'm in Berlin, and I'm totally into the game, you know? This endless game of females and males, the nationalities and the mother tongues. I just try to keep myself on track.

The role of women has been changing throughout the history and across various geographies.

Women did have power in different spots around the world, in different civilisations. However, there is always some man who destroys this history. This is also one of the aims of my Sufi research, to search for this history. I'm working with texts by male writers, but there is a bunch of undiscovered literature by female authors. So it is there, but no one talks about it.

Women also often published books under male monikers.

Exactly. It's in all civilisations.

And what are you currently working on?

I'm continuing to work on my Sufi research, which I would like to finish this year. It's based on the female writers in Sufi history. It's linked to what

How do you play a city?

we've been talking about because it takes a long time to find the books and the history and the texts relating to these amazing women.

Can you tell us more about this Sufi research project?

My research began with a questioning of my own faith and thoughts, which seemed different from the common beliefs of the Muslim community in Egypt where I grew up. Apart from my political, economic, and social background, my passion led me to delve into Sufi philosophy and read ancient literature written in my mother tongue, which I also found difficult to grasp immediately. My passion for invoking sounds and images of the past led me to develop my own way of reviving old texts audiovisually using hisāb 'ljumlah, or Abjad Numerals, wherein numbers and dates are represented alphabetically by assigning specific numeric values to each letter. Historically, the Sufi used this method to interpret holy words by analysing their respective numbers.

What is going to be the output of your research?

A sound composition. I would also like to accompany it with a long text.

Are you also travelling and recording in different places?

I wish, but I don't have the money to travel. It's really hard, especially because I'm working with Persian texts, so it's Iran, Iraq...

So you basically have to do the research online?

Yes. Online and via friends of friends who write to writers who give me historical books. I've been doing this research for three years already, so hopefully this year I'll finish it.

Is psychogeography something you are interested in when doing field research? The atmosphere of a place, the genius loci, as they say. You feel it is different in every place – with some places you connect, with some you don't.

It's a complex thing. Actually, since I started working

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on the soundscape of cities and their architecture, I believe that you can live in a particular city all your life, but the city still controls you. And you don't even have to live somewhere for a year, and you can totally understand the city, the people, how you deal with it day to day, even if it's not your home.

How do you play a city? It's kind of like I'm a part of a game. You don't win all the time. You don't lose all the time. You have ups and downs, like sound waves.

I miss Kyiv



Maryana Klochko

Maryana Klochko is a music producer, vocalist and film composer born in Western Ukraine and based in Kyiv. In her work she often works with the unconscious, through lyrics and vocal parts; she seeks a balance between the real and the fictional. She perceives music as storytelling, finding many visual images in the composition that come to life through sound. Maryana holds an MA in interior design from Lviv Academy of Arts, Ukraine. An art education strongly influenced her perception of music. Her work focuses on experimental, pop, club, post-apocalyptic folk and ambient music.

I wanted to ask, Maryana, how and where are you at the moment?

I am currently living in Berlin. I came here at the end of the summer for a short residency as part of the Artist at Risk programme, and after it ended, I planned to return to Ukraine. But then my plans began to change. In the fall, I had several performances scheduled, and in December, I received an invitation to write music for a film with a particular deadline, so I decided to stay in Berlin a little longer. (At the end of last year, the situation with electricity in Ukraine was very unstable, due to massive, constant shelling of the energy infrastructure by the Russians, and it was quite difficult to work on music in such conditions). I'm going to stay here for a while until I finish the album and then I'll decide according to the situation. To be honest, I've been missing home, and I miss Kyiv.

It's been more than one year since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many Ukrainian artists have since become ambassadors of Ukrainian culture, drawing attention to the many often overlooked producers and artists from the country. You have also introduced fellow musicians in your mixes, for instance in the NTS mix you have made for SHAPE+.

I have a special history with mixes, it's a format that gives me a lot of freedom. I see an important goal in presenting Ukrainian music, because it seems to be in its own 'bubble', so I want it to be heard outside of that "bubble" because it deserves that attention.

People in Ukraine have always generally been very musical; I'm extremely interested in this phenomenon. Singing has accompanied people in different circumstances for ages, and now, in times of war, I think about it a lot. After the invasion began, I moved from Kyiv to my parents' house in the Lviv region. Even though it was much safer there than in other regions of our country, I was under a lot of stress and couldn't write or even listen to music.

Timur Dzhafarov (a Ukrainian musician known as John Object, who joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine a year ago*) expressed an interesting thought in one of his recent interviews, that in conditions of war – sounds become signals that you have to react to in a certain way; at some point the sounds are no longer perceived as music, but as signs.

Of course, there is a difference in what soldiers hear on the front line and the sounds that surround people in the city, but I just think about how in Ukraine, since the start of the Russian invasion, the soundscape has changed drastically. And obviously, the relationship with music has also changed for many people. I also feel this impact on myself.

Would you be able to elaborate – how has the soundscape changed for you since the war?

For example, in Ukraine, people in cities are warned about the air danger by an air raid warning signal. It is switched on when radars detect the launch of a missile carrier, a kamikaze drone, or a rocket. There is a certain algorithm of actions that you need to do as soon as you hear this siren. You need to go to the shelter, or hide at home in a place that is protected by at least two walls; often these temporary shelters are just apartment corridors or bathrooms, etc.

The second siren sound means that the air raid warning has been cancelled, that the danger of a missile attack has passed, and then you return to your normal life, come out of the shelter. Just imagine that these signals sound quite often – in the middle of the night, during the day, in the evening, at any time... It's hard to forget and put these sounds out of your head, and when you hear something like this even somewhere conditionally safe, your body immediately responds with panic. I'm talking about myself and my reactions, maybe someone else's are different.

Or the sound of a scooter or a motorbike outside the window is quite similar to the sound of an

Iranian shahid, but when you have heard something explode afterwards, heard the windows shake in your apartment, you immediately perceive this tone as aggressive and dangerous.

Also, since there is a curfew in Ukrainian cities during martial law, the nights have become incredibly quiet, and it is forbidden to move around the streets after 11pm. It's hard to imagine how quiet cities can be in such conditions.

Also, it is sometimes difficult for me to listen to a drum roll at high volume, or any sound that vaguely reminds me of a siren or explosion, because it all undermines reality and becomes disturbing. I'll never forget how on New Year's Eve, people in Berlin were setting off fireworks for six – seven hours in a row, these sounds were just driving me crazy; it was impossible not to hear them, all the whistling and explosions sounded very realistic.

Storytelling is an important part of your work. Can you talk about some of the narratives that you work with?

I love working with words, playing with their meanings. For me, the word in music works as an additional semantic melody. Sometimes I have dreams that I do not remember when I wake up. I get up in a semi-conscious state, that certain moment when I can't 'hold the dream' in my hands anymore, but my hands still remember what shape it was. In those moments, I write and capture everything that comes to mind with words, and the text grows on its own, forming a plotline. Sometimes these texts appear as lyrics in my songs. Sometimes they just remain as a text.

At some point, I realised it's all part of the same process for me, words are not always necessary, sometimes a state is conveyed only by sounds, timbre, rhythm, noise, or, finally, silence.

The most important role of storytelling in my work is the need to express myself with words, and I believe



that at some point this necessity sparked my desire to create music. This process is very therapeutic for me.

Is folk music something that inspires you?

There is a huge song tradition in Ukraine that goes back a long way, and the songs vary greatly in each region, and cover countless themes. However, for a long time, folk music didn't really resonate with me, it seemed to me that it was something too 'ancient' for me to understand and accept 'now'. But a few years ago, I changed my mind. In 2019, when I was living in Lviv, friends often gathered at our house, and on one of those evenings, at a certain point they started singing folk songs that many of those present knew. What my ears heard that evening stirred my heart and continues to infect me with its beauty to this day. Since that moment, I have become very interested in folk music. My former roommate Zoë taught me many songs, and we used to sing them together at home. In some of my current works, I even use fragments of these songs, blending them with electronic music. It's such a vast field for exploration that it's hard to even imagine. I would be happy if my music helps someone else discover these wonderful things.

You have also worked in film, and your compositions are cinematic and atmospheric. How do you approach working in the audiovisual realm?

My music first appeared in a film almost by chance. In 2017, I was simply asked for permission to use one song as part of a movie soundtrack. At the time, I was performing only acoustically with a guitar. That was probably the first time I ever thought about my music as something that could exist in a visual reality. It was such a small point from which the process then began to develop further.

In cinema, the role of the soundtrack can be very different. It's like a spice – unnoticed, but it has a great impact on taste and emphasises it. When I work with audiovisual reality, I constantly think

I miss Kyiv

about the context in which the music appears. It is important to hear and understand the entire diegetic component of the frame in order to find a way to organically integrate it into this space and understand what exactly it should be. It's like a kind of big comprehensive exercise in attentiveness.

The approach to composing music for films has another interesting feature: I, as an artist, am completely subordinate to the director, who is the absolute – who sees, hears, and knows the story best. In a sense, I partially deny myself, my ego, and become a cog in someone else's machine.

In addition, the director has a distance from the material, and with this fresh perspective, he or she usually understands better than I do whether it's 'it' or not. Music is no different from, for example, painting: to see what you've done, you have to step back and look at your work from a distance. A composer doesn't always have this distance, often the deadlines are so tight that the distance doesn't exist. That's why I really appreciate the director's ability to 'see' the music.

From my side, work with film develops empathy and helps with understanding the world better. I really like that.

How can we, the music community, help Ukrainian artists right now?

There are many different initiatives in Ukraine right now that are bringing Ukraine closer to victory. I will add some links below. By supporting them, you are also supporting Ukrainian artists, because all of this makes it possible for Ukrainian artists to live, work, create, etc.

SHAPE+ platform

LIVYJ BEREH – a volunteer group based in Kyiv and working in regions affected by the war. Raising funds, helping to rebuild houses, distribute food, medication and other materials in liberated cities of Ukraine

https://linktr.ee/livyj_bereh

“Kyiv Angels” is a charity foundation helping civilians and military in Ukraine's hotspots.

<https://kyivangels.org.ua/en>

“Hospitalers” – a Ukrainian volunteer medical battalion

<https://www.hospitalers.life/#WESTERNUNION>

“Come Back Alive” – a foundation providing assistance to the military since 2014

<https://savelife.in.ua/en/>

Interview: Lucia Udvardyová, SHAPE+
Photo: Anatoliy Tatarenko



Collectively
living
another life

An encounter
with
Passepartout
Duo

Drawing from a carefully selected palette of electro-acoustic textures and shapeshifting rhythms, Passetout Duo's work investigates the way in which we listen to and connect with sound. Continually reassessing the tools they use to create their music, the group is constantly developing a specialised and evolving ecosystem of handmade musical instruments, which have ranged from analogue electronic circuits and conventional percussion to room-sized textile installations and found objects. We met the duo after their performance at the SONICA Festival in Ljubljana, at a cafe near the renowned autonomous cultural zone Metelkova.

How did you two meet?

Chris: We met at a music festival where we were performing together, in the States in 2015. We have classical backgrounds. At that time, we were playing a lot of what you would call new music. We played there together in an ensemble for a month. That's where we met, and we've been playing together since then.

How did you develop your musical language as a duo?

C: Coming from a classical background, we've always been on a path leading away from that. The first step was writing music for ourselves, because in that world, writing one's own music instead of working with a composer is somehow controversial for a performer. The language came from writing pieces that we felt were exactly what we wanted to do on stage. The language comes from our different influences, and then, further down the line, came making our own instruments, which then informed the kind of music we wrote. We make the instruments, and from those instruments the seeds are planted for some music that we can play.

Nicoletta: I think that nowadays, when we think about making music, it's both a gut feeling and a thought/ear feeling.

Currently, you basically live and work on the road. Has it been like this since the start?

C: I would say it was more or less always like that. Nico is from Italy, I'm from the States. There was always this distance. Just to make the project work involved a lot of artist residencies because that was where we could be in the same room and make something. We did those artist residencies from very early on. And we also understood how valuable they were for us, so we thought it would be great if we could do it all the time. We worked very hard to make sure that would be possible. Eventually, we became busy enough with the residencies and with touring

that it didn't make sense to rent a place anymore.

Do you think that also influences the aesthetics of the project? You travel a lot, and probably have to think about what equipment you carry around.

N: Totally. Let's say that choosing this lifestyle has become a way to choose the other parts of our lives and work. Moving all the time immediately pushed us to deal with questions of portability, first of all, and also to ask questions about making music that is relevant to different places. In general, it also became a social/political reflection because we've been thinking whether what we are doing is actually what we want to do in life. Everything that we decide comes from a conscious decision and is not taken for granted or acquired. That's how we started taking into account the different phases of the process of creating music – developing our own instruments, writing our own music, booking the shows, and deciding how to release the music, make the album artwork, etc.

Is this self – reliance an important aspect of what you do?

C: Yes. We are fiercely independent, I would say. There is something about taking ownership of every aspect of the creative process that gives us a lot of fulfilment. Putting every aspect of it into question is where our process comes from, and that's what enriches our music and our lives.

There is quite a complex infrastructure in the experimental scene – there are bookers, PR agents, managers. Is it hard for an independent artist to navigate that?

C: We wouldn't know because we have very limited contact with any aspect of that industry. At a certain point, nobody is a better advocate for our work than us. When you are a musician, the music touches you first and nobody is going to change that. It would be quite challenging from the perspective of anybody who works with an artist to take the music as seriously as the artist themselves. I just

cannot imagine that. But it's something that we're always considering, for instance, when it comes to booking. Because if we want to take on those roles ourselves, we do think it's important to take them as seriously as somebody would do if it were their job.

N: If we had to work with somebody it would probably have to be a relationship that developed very organically. And the more we do it ourselves, the less likely it is that we would give up doing so, I think.

You also mentioned that you try to adjust your music to the environment that you play in. Can you talk about that?

C: I wouldn't necessarily say it's an adjustment based on the place. It's more that we endeavour to make music that can be enjoyed by a lot of different types of people, and we don't want to do something that's alienating.

N: There is a kind of feedback loop. In the beginning, if we wanted to bring the music to places other than classical concert halls, we had to play certain types of pieces. If we get feedback from the audience in a certain setting, we realise what works and what doesn't work. If that can be called an adjustment, then yes. The adjustment comes from the experience of what works and what doesn't work in performance. Often, people come up to us after a performance and they tell us we sound like somebody they have heard of before who we might not know.

C: It's kind of funny to discover music that way.

N: There were two traditional instruments that influenced our whole production last year. One is the txalaparta from the Basque Country, and the other is the simantra from Eastern Europe. Our ideas started from the meeting point of a more classical writing technique like, for example, the hocket, and the way in which this is naturally employed in some folk instruments coming from local traditions.

C: Something that is very important to our work is this idea of the hocket, which splits one part between two people – something that would normally be played by one musician can be played by two. Because we are a duo, and because we share the stage, the way that we play music together is very important. We don't want to appear as two soloists. We aim for a sum that is greater than the parts, and it's not something that can be performed by one single person. For us, the hocket is a good way of accessing that. As a technique, it's something of a global phenomenon that exists across many cultures. There is something very visceral and human about these kinds of techniques that come from all cultures.

N: And it tells you a lot about making music together.

C: It's very common in certain music scenes to be a solo act, especially in the electronic music scene. But two or more people making music is still a very powerful thing.

N: We sometimes share not only the stage, but also the instruments.

C: Somebody once described our set as four hands, one instrument. I think that's probably the best way of summing up our approach. We have an ecosystem of instruments that we play as one instrument together.



Is it pre – decided who is doing the music, the instrumentation and the performance?

C: A lot of it is pre – decided because a lot of things we do require a lot of rehearsing for their coordination. Another question in our work is the role of improvisation versus the role of composition, which connects strongly to our background. There are certain things that are not improvisable, like playing something in unison, because you need to know the future, and the only way to do that is to plan. There are a lot of powerful techniques that cannot be improvised, and of course, there are also a lot of things that can only happen through improvisation. Like a piece that changes every time you play it, and that's important too. Generally, I would say that everything we do is pre – composed, but there are a lot of indeterminate elements to the music, which are going to be different every time we play it because of the way electronics work, etc.

And unpredictability is something that interests you?

C: We are extremely interested in systems and processes and how these can be made into music. Once a process gets complicated enough, it becomes something which is changing all the time, and that is something very interesting, too.

How would you describe your modus operandi in practice?

C: I can't say it's a well regimented thing; every day needs something different and there's a list of things that need to happen, and we just try to get to them all as soon as we can. That list of things is booking shows, organising the logistics, applying for residencies, working on the project for those residencies. There are very urgent things that need to be done immediately, but there are also things that are not urgent at all but are very important to us, like designing new instruments, or rehearsing, which requires a long vision into the future and also a little bit of work every day. There are days when we rehearse for a few hours

Collectively living another life

every day, and then there are periods when we are playing every day and there is no time for rehearsing.

But you also manage to do these things while on the road, like instrument making?

C: A lot of the instrument building also happens on the road because it's often done with some CAD software. So far, the instruments have been built for us, but we are currently developing one as a product that should be available in the next year, hopefully. This is especially important to us because so much creative energy has gone into this instrument so that it can work for us, and we are very eager to see what other people could do with it, and what kind of community could grow around it.

Do you see any parallels between the classical world and the more electronic scene?

C: It's really hard to say – they share a certain DNA in the form of influential composers, like Cage, or Alvin Lucier, figures that cross over. Or, for example, as a percussionist, I am a huge lover of Xenakis, but then some electronic musicians are also fans of Xenakis, just coming at it from a different perspective. In terms of the scene, I think they are quite different, there is a different audience atmosphere; the classical concert atmosphere is a bit like the quiet car on the train. Personally, I find it very anxiety – inducing, but I think every person that goes through music school has a certain amount of baggage related to that time in their life, and that is probably unavoidable.

What have you learnt about the world during these six years?

N: I feel that for most of my life I have been very intrigued by the idea of living somebody else's life, and what it would be like. I have been wondering recently if, when we are performing, we are either inviting the audience to live our life, or if we are all collectively living another life. Of course, when we are travelling, we

SHAPE+ platform

are always strangers, we are always guests – then we are living different lives as well, and I wouldn't go so far as to say that it increases our wisdom, but I think it does help our empathy, and maybe that's a good thing.

C: It has also stretched our comfort zones tremendously – what you think you are uncomfortable with grows as soon as you are in that uncomfortable situation. I value that a lot, too.

And about the music scenes that you are a part of, is there a change of perspective, are they the same everywhere?

N: For me it's really funny that you can play the same forty – five minutes of music, and in one country it's worth sixteen hundred euros, and in another country, it's worth zero. I think that every country is very different.

C: But sometimes it also happens that we see a copy – and – paste of a venue halfway across the world from it. There are certain things that are always in common. I wonder if it's because of the Internet or not, or maybe the kind of people that this type of music attracts. But of course, there is always a different flavour everywhere you go.

SHAPE+ User manual for curious artists

IS SHAPE+ A GOOD FIT FOR YOU?

You are a musician or act based in the EU or eligible countries. Perhaps an audiovisual artist or an artist working with sound and related audiovisual art.

WHAT CAN SHAPE+ DO FOR YOU?

It can give you opportunities to work in different European cities in the form of:

- collaborative residencies;
- performances, exhibitions and other artist presentations;
- networking events with other SHAPE+ artists;
- promotion of your work through media partners and social media.

WHO WOULD YOU WORK WITH IN SHAPE+?

A list of festivals and venues that participate in SHAPE+ (as of June 2023) can be found in the beginning of this publication, but the network of associate partners and local artists in each city is much wider.

HOW CAN YOU BECOME PART OF SHAPE+?

Follow the SHAPE+ website around March and look for the annual open call. Alternatively, you can subscribe to our newsletter (via the SHAPE+ website) and follow our FB/IG to be the first to receive info about upcoming open calls and other activities. You will then be asked to read the eligibility criteria and fill in an online form.

Within a couple of months of collective discussions, voting and careful selection, the resulting SHAPE+ artist list is announced, with at least one third of it selected from the open call submissions. However, due to the high volume of submissions, we

SHAPE+ platform

are unable to write back to each applicant, unless they are voted into the artist roster of SHAPE+.

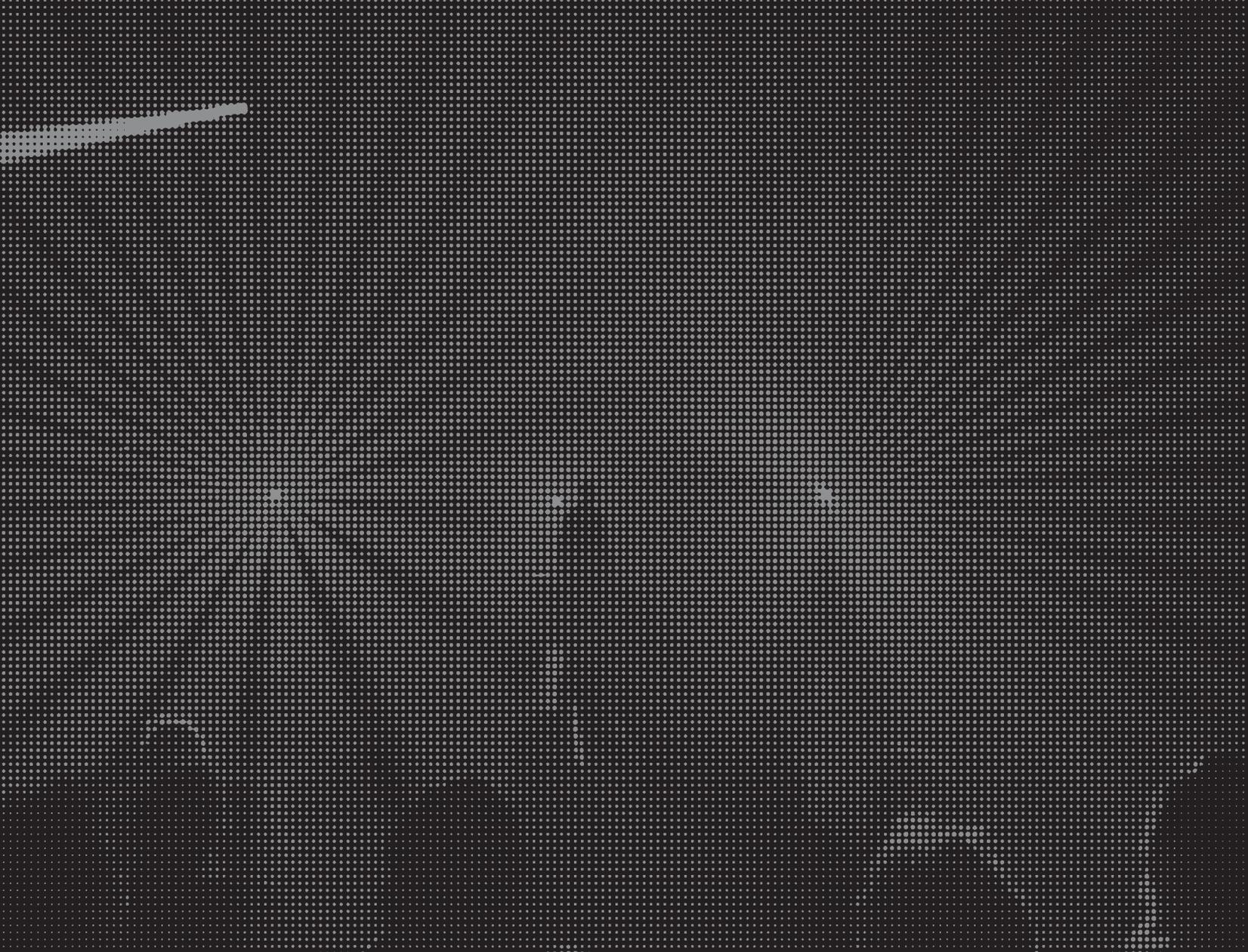
HOW MUCH TIME WOULD YOU SPEND AS PART OF THE PROJECT?

The annual artist list of SHAPE+ is attached to a working period of 12 months. Your individual activities may happen at any point during this period.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US?

By writing to info@shapeplatform.eu or through social media.

Photo next page: Udo Siegfried/CTM 2023



SHAPE

SOUND, HETEROGENEOUS
ART AND PERFORMANCE
IN EUROPE PLUS

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Michal Brenner, Rihards Endriksons,
Lucia Udvardyová, and Max Dvořák

Graphic design by Jozef Sklenka
Printed by Těšínské papírny, s.r.o., Český Těšín

Published by MeetFactory o.p.s., 2023
ISBN 978 – 80 – 906994 – 9 – 6
shapeplatform.eu

SHAPE+ is a three – year initiative funded by the European Union.
Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s)
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European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither
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SHAPE+ is a new European platform for innovative music and audiovisual art funded by the European Union. Running for three years, SHAPE+ fosters exceptional emerging talent, connecting them to local communities and audiences through collaborative residencies with multiple artistic outcomes, commissioned artworks, as well as one-off presentations and performances. Combining an open call and a curatorial selection, the platform members select a roster of artists to support each year.

SHAPE+ initially consists of 13 partners in 13 countries with plans for further expansion, while adopting an interdisciplinary approach and committing to social and environmental awareness.

SHAPE+ builds upon the previous SHAPE platform, which from 2015 to 2022 supported 336 emerging European artists and presented their work at festivals, events and venues in numerous countries across Europe and beyond.