Nottingham Contemporary

Sat 9 Apr
6–7.30pm

A Dialogue Through Material

by Céline Condorelli and Hannah Catherine Jones

Live transcript

While every effort has been made to provide an accurate written record of this event, some errors may exist in this transcript.
If you require further information please contact cmasters@nottinghamcontemporary.org

SPEAKERS
Hannah Catherine Jones, Celine Condorelli, Canan Batur

05:40 Canan Batur
Hello, how are you? Good. A very warm welcome to A Dialogue Through Material. My name is Canan Bature and I'm the curator of live programmes here at Nottingham Contemporary. We hope all of you and your families are well and healthy in these complicated unprecedented times. For those of you have been with us previously at Nottingham Contemporary, welcome back and for those who are here for the first time in the building, thank you for joining our community and today's event. It's a pleasure to host tonight's conversation, A Dialogue Through Material between our exhibiting artists, Celine Condorelli and Hannah Catherine Jones. You can see the manifestation of their work in gallery two - if you haven't seen, the exhibition is on for another week. So do visit us again soon. Our live programmes open up different interventions and propositions within curatorial research across the organisation. And this event expands on our current exhibition, Our Silver City, but it also connects with our multi platform research programme, Emergency and Emergence, which unearths transdisciplinary, sensorial and speculative practices of radical sense making and wayfinding via questions of repair, pedagogy, remediation and mutation. This evening Celine Condorellia and Hannah Catherine Jones

Talk

will discuss their collaboration and practice by sharing visual, aural and literary references that have influenced their works in the exhibition Our Silver City. By bringing together unlikely materials, they will create an active archive, juxtapose with one another to trace what residues may leave behind. Some very brief housekeeping notes before I introduce our guests, our live programmes of talks performances and screenings, seek to create challenging environments where open mindedness and respect for each other's approaches and perspectives can foster growth, so please be mindful and respectful of each other's opinions and views. I would like to use this opportunity to extend our thanks to our funders, the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University for generously and graciously supporting today's events, as well as my colleagues Helen Hamilton, Jim Brouwer, Shannon Charlesworth, Tom Chamberlain, and so many for making this event possible. Lastly as with all events here at Nottingham Contemporary, today's talk is free to attend, but all donations are greatly appreciated to help support future free programmes. So without further delay, I'm very pleased to introduce our speakers. Celine Condorelli is a London and Lisbon based artist and was one of the founding directors of Eastside Projects Birmingham. She's the author and editor of Support Structures published by Sternberg press in 2009. Condorelli combines a number of approaches from developing structures for supporting to broader inquiries into forms of commonality and discursive sites. Hannah Catherine Jones, aka Foxy Moron is a London based artist, scholar, multi-instrumentalist, radio presenter and DJ. For those who haven't listened to it yet, she has a brilliant show on NTS, titled The Opera Show, so please do check it out. She is a composer and conductor and founder of Peckham Chamber Orchestra, a community project established in 2013. Jones is currently an AHRC Scholar at Oxford University for which the ongoing body of work The Oweds will be presented as a series of live and recorded audio visual episode compositions using disruptive sound as a methodology of institutional decolonisation. And she'll be sharing that with us today as

well. I'm going to hand it over to our guests who will speak for an hour and then we will open up to questions and reflections from you. And the floor is yours, Celine and Hannah.

09:45 Hannah Catherine Jones
Thank you. Thank you.

09:46 Celine Condorelli
So the first thing to say is that the reason there was a track playing just before Canan introduced us, thank you so much. It's not a random track. It comes from a playlist that Hannah had made for an arts institution called Wysing Art Centre. Before I met Hannah, I encountered her work. And that was one of the things that I was listening to when I was thinking through the project, looking for somebody to commission to make a soundtrack for an exhibition. To make a soundtrack for the exhibition that is upstairs, except that at the time, I really had no idea what it was going to look like. And specifically, within I think it's a 45 minute long playlist, it's an hour, that track which is, I didn't know what it was, but it's called Time Lapse, just did something to me, it still does, actually, I think it's an incredibly glorious track, and in many ways, and it just stayed with me. So that track is one of the reasons why I looked for you.

10:57 Hannah Catherine Jones
And yeah, I was really pleased when you invited me to kind of contribute to the second, it's gallery two right where the show is. And to sort of respond to your, the way that you framed the show and your installation. Because you are essentially like an artist and curator of that space. And I remember the way that you approached me was kind of like, I need to give the room like a soul. I need to find some sort of sonic way of bringing everything together. So I sort of approached it as a yeah, as a composer, someone you know that word composer means someone that puts things together, but it's like, brings together sounds and tries to sort of like get a sense for what the energy of that space needs to be. Yeah, and it's funny

because the the Michael Nyman track The Time Lapse, it's part of a, it's a soundtrack to a film by Peter Greenaway called A Zed and Two Noughts. So yeah, it's cinematic. It's something that I use as part of a wider playlist, you can see all my notes, I realise I'm like, huh, lots of bits about sunrise anyway, just sharing my screen, my screen is full of things that may or may not be relevant, but you know, feast your eyes. Yeah, but the initial kind of material was the way that you were looking at octopuses. And that was the kind of inspiration for how I was trying to think about colour and texture in sound. But maybe you want to kind of show a bit of that.

12:48 Celine Condorelli
Yes, the initial invitation was very much centred around this ongoing research that I have, I've been working with colour separation and colour printing and colour in print for quite a long time, and there's a certain dead-endness to how prints are produced, you're all familiar with the CMYK process to create the illusion of colour. Now the recent research into what printing might look like in the future, is not to create the illusion of colour, but looks like looks at animals like cephalopods, and specifically octopus in terms of creating skins that are capable of producing a colour effect. So that colour in that sense is not you know, it's not something that looks like colour, but it is a state. And what I mean by that is, I think really incredibly well illustrated by this youtube clip, which doesn't have any sound made by a diver. So that's not a digital animation, that's actually an animal that you can't see until you see it until the animal sees the camera, basically, and realises that they need to escape. And then just at the end, they come back and it just splurts a little bit of ink. Right, which is, of course a defence mechanism, but that's how humans have developed printing is through ink. So the relationship between colour printing, and an animal that hasn't changed very much in 16 million years, and yet, still holds the key to what we may be able to do in the future is to md quite extraordinary and I think I'll show you this clip actually.

15:01 Hannah Catherine Jones
Can we watch, can we have the rest of it playing while we chat just because it is an incredible clip? And it's not gonna,

15:07 Celine Condorelli
I think it's this guy.

15:08 Hannah Catherine Jones
I remember now because yeah, it's just that beginning bit that shows, yeah, this thing this kind of, I guess what we would call a phenomenon. But when we had our first conversation about it, you were telling me all this other stuff about it, about how that happens and how it's not only colour, but it's texture. So it's like the octopus changes the texture of its skin too as part of the camouflage. So if it's on like a rough sort of knobbly surface, its skin will imitate that. So it made me think of topological topographic. What's that word?

15:50 Celine Condorelli
Topographical maps?

15:51 Hannah Catherine Jones
Thank you. Where you have the layers. And, you know, there's something about that that's just extraordinary. So as a, like, a someone who's working with sound, and was thinking through, you know, how do I go about putting myself in a position to connect with the show, you know, Our Silver City, 2094, this futuristic, thinking of the future through, you know, what is the world going to be like, in that year? What are the kinds of like, memories are we going to have of the kinds of sounds and how do I sort of use this incredible creature as a way to explore texture, and what I mean by that is like, as a multi instrumentalist, I'll be listening to how one tone sounds. The instruments I use in the soundtrack are synthesisers. So this idea of synthesis and sort of, you know, being made up of many things, or being able to kind of signify many things was super important. And this one's so beautiful, the way this is a

closeup, right of the actual cells.

17:03 Celine Condorelli
So that's the closeup of the skin. There's a film upstairs by Anna Barham that also films the skin of a cephalopod asleep. And I mean, for anybody, you know, to go back to image making, for anybody who's ever done any printing, this is very much what the half toning processes in silk screen, if you zoom in on a newspaper, that's what you see, you see dots of colour. And it's, there's something so bizarre about this similarity, because of course, this is like an abstract composition, that, you know, I see it as an abstract composition, but it's actually the skin of this extraordinary animal. It also dreams, the octopus is able to dream through its skin because it's got a dispersed nervous system. So it's, you know, many people describe this animal as the most alien that one could imagine, because it's extremely, extraordinarily intelligent, probably as intelligent as humans if not more, but at the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of how it functions. So the octopus doesn't have a brain and a body, its entire skin is part of the nervous system. So it's like a dispersed skin. So it is literally able to think through its skin.

18:18 Hannah Catherine Jones
I've just popped this up, because that's what's come to my mind, because I've been researching into cymatics. And I watched this documentary the other day, Hans Jenny, he's a Swiss, he's from Switzerland. This video, it kind of shows what happens to different materials when they are when different pitches encounter them. So how sound itself can radically change if you use sand, or if you use water, and you alter one pitch, so you might have like a mmm and it might shift up. And the patterns will be completely different based on the, you know, frequency, the number of vibrations per second that that's essentially what sound is. So, in terms of thinking about how I put the soundscape together, I was absolutely thinking about slow changing pitches, maybe in between one or two notes. And then the motifs that I ended up using,

it was sequential. I think there were bigger steps than that, like doo doo doo and this descending sort of feeling as you know, as the octopus goes underwater as this kind of sense of despair, this sort of going, feeling quite down thinking about this year 2094. And us as humans and I'm kind of like properly you know, going all over the place, but that's kind of what this commission collaboration did to me - it asked me to think about what it is I do think will be left or what it is that I would maybe like to be remembered. And that's a combination of things. So thinking about the synthesis of pitch itself through the instruments, you know, I used a microKORG, lots of bass, a subwoofer, I wanted it to kind of make an impression on the body, you know, I want you to be able to feel the bass. But I also I'm thinking maybe it's time to play a piece maybe in the background that sort of inspired how I got there because thinking of, you know, this future and looking back from the future or thinking of ourselves as being studied, you know, maybe and the title of the work I called it In Memoriam which I spelt incorrectly a number of times. And I realised as I was making it that I was sort of dialoguing with or semi sort of sampling quoting a piece written by Arvo Pärt that I've done with the orchestra I've conducted it and I'll just play a bit of it and then maybe talk a bit more.

24:08 Celine Condorelli
As it happens nature has evolved an eye almost like ours but in reverse, the right side out eye belongs to certain cephalopods including octopuses, squids and their ilk. It is a single lens structure with an iris, a lens and a retina just like the human eye, and light enters the eyeball and is projected against the retina just as in the human eye. The cephalopod eyes even develop in a similar way to the vertebrates albeit with one crucial exception, no folding back and forth occurs. So the part of the system that becomes the optic nerve remain visibly on the outside, and their equivalent to our photoreceptors ends up on the inside, with no extra layers to buffer incoming light. Current research indicates that octopuses are colourblind, though they see and distinguish

complex information including shapes, brightness and spatial orientation, just as humans do. Unlike humans, they can also perceive the plains of polarisation of light. This may indicate that the octopus has the ability to communicate with its own kind, by manipulating the polarisation of light reflected off its skin. Meanwhile, evading detection or at least decoding by other animals, including us. In the brains of high organisms like octopuses and humans, Jung emphasised that the determining factor in specific memory formation is not the requisite quantity of chemicals, but the patterns of connectivity, the new behaviour is likely to be the result of new connections, and new connections will be made in response to the unexpected environmental stimulus that interrupts familiar patterns, the non sequitur. Through its ongoing process of remembering and learning, remembering and learning brains are physically modified by directly adapting to changes in their physical environment. The context makes the subject. Octopus behaviours are categorised as displays and anti-displays. A display is a pattern consisting of some combination of movement, posture, colour and texture change. Displays may be either ritualised or unritualised. Unritualised displays are numerous and frequent in which information is incidentally encoded. Ritualised displays are relatively infrequent, in which information is deliberately encoded. Every display communicates information but ritualised displays have been adapted by the octopus, specifically to communicate something.

26:57 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's, yeah, so amazing. And I've read that before, because that's the kind of like, remix of a lot of your bits that you've read, research that you found, and then also like your take, or what you've kind of seen as being important to this, to use that word methodology of the octopus for this, I want to say show installation, but creative practice, let's say because it is broader than what's in the show, right? And what really stands out to me, in relation to like music about that is this ritual and unritual or ritualised and unritualised in terms of

thinking about how I encountered this piece, this music in the background and how you could say that the weeks and weeks of rehearsals, of preparing it is like the unritualised. And then the live performance of it is the ritual. So it's almost like, there's, I can't help but think of that just based on the fact that you know, I'm going through stuff with the orchestra right now we're rehearsing for a concert and reflecting on might, how this piece is like I absorbed it, and it came out when I was trying to make the music for the soundtrack and not in like, I listen back to it as like, I'm doing like a descending motif that seems to keep getting longer and longer and more expansive, and more expansive. Because Arvo Part wrote that piece of music. The last note is just you're just there at the bottom, everyone's doing the same note, and you've kind of arrived at a place together. And the last thing you hear is the bell, the chime of the bell sort of ringing on there. And to kind of take it back to what I actually made, it seems super important thinking of this city, Nottingham, and you know, what are the sounds of the city that would kind of make sense in the context of thinking about a future? And of course, the bell, the church bells, St.Mary's Church and the bell is having this, I guess it signifies like death. You're like, you kind of hear it a lot in film soundtracks, where it's kind of like, you know, the knell, and it will ring on it does that kind of thing. Yeah, and I guess it is a very sort of a meandering way of just trying to acknowledge how much that piece, getting inside that piece affected me as a musician and how I like I said, I noticed it emerged in in the way that I'd made this piece. How do we remember something, you know, in memoriam? It's a lament and it's something that forces you to kind of like, go deeper kind of, to think about things, to reflect on things and to think about, you know, the rate that we're going like this is worthy of a lament, you know. Yeah. And also just taking a moment to appreciate how well the music seems to go with this which is just like, yes.

30:14 Celine Condorelli
So two notes to that. The book that we're pointing out is the

novella written by Liz Jensen, I hope you might have seen it upstairs. Liz Jensen was one of the four commissioned artists to develop ideas for the show. And as we workshopped over a period of two years to try and think what the city that we're in, Nottingham, might be, like, in 2094, what the future might be. This pervasive idea of ecological breakdown was perhaps the most present. And the thing we could not get rid of, you know, it was impossible to think about the future, outside ecological breakdown. That's, that was the dominating idea in all of the conversations that we had. And it is, I think, you know, not just true of us as a group of people, it is just the thing that one sees in the future. The other note, which is completely unrelated about the church bell, which you've just reminded me, of a story that I studied, because I was looking at the history of the separation between animate and inanimate objects, which is not such an obvious story. Actually, you know, for example, there's now lawyers trying to give rights to forests or rivers, you know, so this idea of who is able to speak for themselves, which is the traditional distinction with legal subjects, is not necessarily that obvious. But there was a bell that was in Russia, in a town called Uglich, a bell that rang the signal of insurrection, instead of the signal of mourning, during the death of the son of Ivan the Terrible, this is in the 17th century, I think. And the bell was sentenced to permanent exile, as well as the person who rang it. So the object was guilty. You know, it was not actually uncommon in common law in Britain until the 18th century to condemn the person who had committed a crime, as well as the object of the crime. So a knife that was used to murder somebody would also be thrown away or destroyed or lost at sea. Anyway, this bell was condemned to permanent exile and was sent to some field in Siberia, where it remained for 80 years. And it had to be officially pardoned by a priest in order to come back to the church where it now hangs in Uglich. And this whole thing took like, almost a century. So the idea of one, objects being guilty, or at least complicit, and definitely sentient and responsible, and also the bell containing this capacity for communication is somehow there.

33:02 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's fascinating. That is so fascinating. And it reminds me of something that a student of mine, I always feel a bit weird about that because like I learned so much from her, but she was telling me about oh my god, I can't remember any of the words that I need to remember to tell this story properly. So I'll just kind of try my best, but a coastal town somewhere really down south. And she went and did a recording of these bells. And these bells were used almost like a sonic lighthouse. So they were used to kind of warn of approaching ships because you could hear the bells from sea, but you if you knew what you were listening for, so it was kind of used as like an oral sort of signal of I'm going to kind of leave that there ringing in the air as it were because I can't tell the story fully. But that is so fascinating. And they do have this, I don't know how to describe it. They are this kind of, they're circular, they're dome-like, they kind of contain but kind of push out sound and they are a way of communicating often a passage of time, but also like to tell you that there is a place of ritual communion like where the bell is, you know what I mean, you go to the church to gather often to sing so for me it was like yes, the bell does have this, is it stereotypical or like it doesn't have to be stereotypical in a bad way but it signifies death in a kind of composerly way but it also signifies the places where we come together. But your that story is wild, absolutely wild and I can't quite like assemble my thoughts on what I feel about the bell - do I feel sorry for it? Do I like, do I think it should have been punished?

35:02 Celine Condorelli
I forgot an element to the story. It was pardoned, but its tongue was taken out so that it would never ring again. And this is the church of the main town Uglich, which I've never been to. But you when you see photographs today of the church, you see this bell with the tongue taken out. So it is mute.

35:23 Hannah Catherine Jones
Wow. I mean, wow, let's take a moment for the bell. That's a lot. That's fascinating. I mean, let me try, I mean, that's one element. We could talk about the bell for hours. In terms of trying to think of, yeah, elements to the soundscape. The bell was important, synthesisers were important. It was really fascinating encountering the show and seeing some of the objects that were there, including, like a kind of concrete, kind of radio-esque - it certainly has an antenna on it. And I was like, yes, because one of the synthesisers I use, the Theremin is essentially a failed radio, that's how it was invented. It has an antenna, it has another antenna there. And it works with proximity to this antenna to create pitch. So it's a transmitter. And it's something that you are searching for sound with as in, you're like, whoa, I got no notes to press. So there's, it has that quality to it. But it also, you know, it's ironic because it kind of it does communicate, but not in a radio way where it gives you information. It communicates through this eerie timbre that you're like, it's uncanny. Because you're a bit like is it a human voice? Or is it? Is it, what is it? And I think using that, it's very overused in a science fiction kind of way. But the way I use it, I tend to use it more in like a lamenting sort of way or with the voice which kind of like, yeah, sort of subverts it. I'm playing with that uncanniness of the digital and the human. Much like our mates, the octopus, this thing of like, when should I put a filter on my voice in song. so it very gradually shifts timbre, like the octopus does, but in a way that's, you know, sort of how you feel rather than what you see, it's still like about perception. Even if it's not like you know, the octopus is doing it to well, it is a form of communication. I'm not going to try and like lock it down through that is that and that is that. But maybe I should play something that's really important. Maybe not the whole thing, but something to do with the voice. Is that appropriate? Or like, do you want to. I reckon, I reckon. I reckon the voice and then and then, if that's all right, because just thinking about in relation to the bell and the synthesisers, I really did want to have something human in there. And I was thinking specifically of Leontyne Price. And to give you a bit of

context, this was her last performance at the New York Met, it was in 1985. And the track that she's singing is called O, Patria Mia, which means, Oh, my dear homeland, and then the I think it's got the lyrics there. But I was thinking a lot about this is in the levels in this. Sorry.

38:43 Celine Condorelli
It's fatherland actually.

38:45 Hannah Catherine Jones
Is it?

38:45 Celine Condorelli
Unfortunately, sorry.

38:47 Hannah Catherine Jones
Well, I flipped it to motherland. You know, patriarchy is always lurking, isn't it? So yeah, I'll play a little bit of this. And then we'll yeah, we'll just keep keep chatting.

42:09 Celine Condorelli
Amazing.

42:13 Hannah Catherine Jones
It's a shame not to have the whole thing - I will say that it had 25 minutes of applause and a standing ovation, can you imagine? But it was her last performance as an opera singer and the fact that she was playing, you know, Nubian Aida, first Black opera singer on the stage at the Met, Black female opera singer on stage. And that performance with its layers, and it was live streamed in 1985. So it's like cutting edge technology, the way that she sings the glissando. That's the kind of like, I guess the energy that I guess we were talking about earlier? And how to kind of like, well, you were saying it, so I kind of don't want to step on what the energy that you were saying about what you wanted to create, which.

43:03 Celine Condorelli

Yeah, so I was trying to describe why this is connected to making exhibitions, you know, like, what, what is it that? That makes sense to me in a way. Why did I call you know, and I think what you're referring to is this idea that I always think that I'm not exhibiting anything, I'm trying to expose you, an audience or myself, to an experience, and a really precise or as precise as possible, aesthetic experience. So I think part of the point of working with exhibition making is, you know, in the way that I do, which means I mix lots of works by lots of people, I think through many different types of material. And I think with people, I don't think alone, is to try and create an aesthetic experience, so that it inverses the sort of object subject ideas that are normally, you walk into a room and you see a thing on display that is just contained, and you just walk off to the next thing, so that I think it's, you know, sometimes I manage it, sometimes I don't, it's quite difficult to do, obviously, part of it is an interest in the audience, you know, and not thinking of the audience as actually passive, but as making meaning by walking through from thing to thing and creating effectively culture and in that sense, also the culture of the future. But there are these rare moments when something that you see or something that you're exposed to, just pierces through, and really touches you, because normally culture is this thing that you know, it's supposed to touch you, you can't touch it in general, but it's rare that the feeling is mutual, right, that it's reciprocal that the, you just get something that goes straight in and it's not exactly discursive. It's not exactly just through your brain. And I mean, it happened with me through your work. Definitely. And that was the question whether it's possible to construct it within an exhibition experience as well. It's happened to me a few other times, including through this performance that I saw at Tate, maybe that's the time to talk about it. So in 2018, I saw Min Tanaka perform at Tate he was performing inside an installation of a sort of steam fog by an artist whose name I've now forgotten but will come back to me and I found it well, I'll just show you it's a very short clip This is an incredible convergence of minds, right, there's

usually Ryuichi Sakamoto, there's Fujiko Nakaya and Min Tanaka. I found this performance absolutely incredible. And I was thinking you know the moments when you go somewhere and you make the effort of going somewhere and it just changes everything and makes your day, makes your week, makes your month, but I was thinking Min Tanaka, I know this name. Why would I know this person? And it took me ages to realise that it was the same person who had performed in you know, I know about it because I know this little piece of footage. I don't know how famous it actually is. But there was a performance of Butoh dance. So traditional Japanese, you know, even operatic dance in a clinic for psychotic patients in the 80s that was run by a philosopher. He was a clinician and a philosopher called Guattari So it's the same guy. When he performed at Tate, he must have been this is 2018, he must have been in his late 80s because you also see him here performing at La Borde in France, this clinic founded by Felix Guattari, in which the patients were free, free to roam, and there was no treatment or such. And there was an incredibly rich cultural life. And Min Tanaka was there for some months but this was a piece of footage that I knew.

51:56 Hannah Catherine Jones
I'm just like, yeah, it's funny because we both seem to have turned to, like the 80s. And like these moments of like, and also the operatic because the dancer is Min Tanaka. Yeah. So he chose that piece of music to be the soundtrack for that footage, right? Yeah.

52:19 Celine Condorelli
No no it was playing, it was playing outside. So he danced to it.

52:24 Hannah Catherine Jones
Was somebody singing?

52:26 Celine Condorelli
I know this from secondhand accounts. It is in history books,

but

52:30 Hannah Catherine Jones
Got you I'm just trying to understand as to whether there was a live opera singer, or it was playing on a record. It sounds like it's a record. Because it for me, it's like, I can't like look at that and not take in all the elements like the birds singing, the fact that it's operatic, that I mean, it kind of comes down to because that footage is very, very affecting, it just is, there's a look of ecstasy on his face. There's, you know, the wider context of them being in a psychiatric kind of, you know, asylum or, you know, institution. There's a lot going on, and I think that I wonder what it would be like with a different soundtrack to it. I know that yeah, this is kind of, you can't separate out that performance from that piece of music that's been played at all - well you can mute it and put something else but I mean, in terms of like, how we're talking and thinking about it, and I guess like, yeah, it makes me think a lot of just how important the voice is, the human voice in song. And again, I know we're anchored into opera, which is, you know, my, one of my areas of specialty and interest and also in a big way trying to sort of shake up what that is and think about it in terms of vocal labour rather than, you know, this western, the pinnacle, like the crown jewels of like culture, but at the same time, it sort of does do that. And it is, it comes back to the very vibrations, the oscillations and how they hit us on a physiological level. How similar opera is to, you know, it's the voice in an extreme of emotion. So that makes us think of crying, of screaming, of pleasure, of pain. So it's always going to kind of like tip you and in fact, it reminds me of I always say always, I often mention something, another French person, Lacan, said about the infant's cry, like you can, you're going to, you might struggle with my pronunciation here. So the infants cry described as, sorry, was that the tension of the upcoming terrible pronunciation. So Lacan described, the infant's cry as un cri pur, P U R, the pure cry, a pure cry, yeah. And un cri por P O U R - can you pronounce those two things?

55:12 Celine Condorelli
What's the second one?

55:13 Hannah Catherine Jones
So I'm going to write it down and you're going to pronounce.

55:14 Celine Condorelli
The first one is pur. Yeah.

55:16 Hannah Catherine Jones
Un Cri P U R, and the other one's, P O U R Un Cri Pour. So say them both again

55:23 Celine Condorelli
Un cri pur et un cri pour, it takes quite a bit of living in France to know the difference between these two. But the differences between a pure cry and a cry for, crying for something.

55:37 Hannah Catherine Jones
And that's really important, because when the infant comes out, it's crying because because it's pure, it's just been born. It's got breath in its lungs, it's like, ah, and then it's also a cry for the mother and you know, it turns, it understands that that becomes the language I cry and I get something. So I read that, and it proper stuck with me because I love puns. And because I'm fascinated by the voice and when we sing, we can sing because it's just so important to kind of have that release, and that intensity, but it's also to communicate with people and to affect them. And I think that's why opera seems to like, you know, we can't seem to get away from it. I do have a specific interest in it. I do try and destabilise it and decolonise it, but at the same time, we have both arrived at these like moments that include, you know, this energy that we would like to at least incorporate into how we make art or make the artistic experience. That's kind of how I'm sort of, yeah, thinking about the dialogue between these these materials that we've arrived at. But yeah.

56:58 Celine Condorelli
Should we open for questions?

56:59 Hannah Catherine Jones
Yeah, maybe so.

57:01 Celine Condorelli
Does anybody have any questions or comments?

57:06 Audience member
Is it because you're a musician that you decided to think about the bells that were sounding out to sea, rather than a foghorn?

57:16 Hannah Catherine Jones
Oh, that's a good question. I mean, a foghorn has a completely different kind of effect. I hadn't. I mean, the reason that I was thinking about bells is because we're in the city of Nottingham, and the church is right there. Had we been on a coastal town and, you know, that would have been part of the soundscape potentially? Not sure. I guess I was trying to just incorporate sounds that I knew were of this city. And, like I said it has this, like, sort of signification of death, and communion. And I guess I just wanted to, like, anchor on that. But there are sirens in the work. And I guess in a way, I was thinking about emergency, as in, you know, emergency vehicles, but also like, these mythical creatures that we call sirens that sing. So I was trying to like pun on that. And a fog horn, and a siren you know, it's a sound that comes from a vehicle so we could do a foghorn remix.

58:32 Audience member
Following up from that, as you are a trained musician, when you are composing these pieces of music as soundscapes, are you still following the normal things that musicians do and keeping within certain chordal limits?

58:52 Hannah Catherine Jones

That's a good question. I I guess in the work that I produced for this, the Portal In Memoriam it's called, the soundtrack or the sound work, I don't know what you want to call it, composition. It is quite tonal. There's jarring elements to it because of the way that I've sort of used samples of things like keyboards and static and modems. I couldn't necessarily tell you what key it's in. But I'm pretty sure it's in a melodic minor mode. So almost like you know, Gregorian Chant monks of back in the day. It's not in a like it's not in it's certainly not in a major key. It's in a minor key. Or can I even say that? Yes, that's the word I was looking for. Thank you. It's definitely an intuitive sort of like, the way I made it was like entering into the energy of all the things that I thought gave me a sense of what I wanted to produce for this. And it was produced kind of like a performance but in my little home studio, and then I worked with every and it was 48 minutes of sounds I've made and the energy that I had, and then I just kind of post produced it to make what's in the gallery there. But yeah, it was intuitive.

1:00:25 Audience member
You talked about vocal labour. I don't know what you're talking about. I'm a singer, myself, as well. And you talked about destabling something and destabling and decolonising, and I want to hear what you're talking about. It sounds like there's something that needs to be expressed. And I'd like to hear that.

1:00:39 Hannah Catherine Jones
Sure. So I see all types of singing, like whether you're trained as an opera singer, which I have been lucky enough to be to have done that, or whether you are, you know, Mariah Carey, or whether you are an untrained voice singing in the local community choir, indigenous kind of practices that would just use voice as part of it without even thinking what, like or even categorising, rather what we would call, you know, this is a genre - this is jazz singing, this is opera, this is this, this is that. So what I try and do through the radio show that I've been doing for years, it's called The Opera Show. So it

has a certain set of expectations around what kind of music I would be playing, of which Leontyne Price singing in this style would be like expected, and I do play kind of what we would traditionally understand as opera for a lot of the reasons that yeah, we were getting on to towards the end. But ultimately, I do have a kind of wider mission to destabilise what we would consider to be opera, or what we would consider to be like. It's almost like trying to destabilise the idea of high art and low art and just be like, let's just equalise it to be like, all forms of vocal labour have value and affect depending on the context, and we shouldn't just privilege one over the other. Yeah, that's what I was trying.

1:02:08 Audience member
So do you mean it's destabilising what opera is or destabilising the idea of hierarchical vocals?

1:02:13 Hannah Catherine Jones
Hopefully both.

1:02:16 Audience member
Is opera a style, or?

1:02:18 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's a good question. I mean, how much vibrato is there? These are the things that I wonder how, yeah, that questions we might ask of how to do that. But it's a massive topic. And yeah, I'm glad a singer's kind of like, probing me on it. But it is, it's really fascinating. So many people say, oh, I can't sing. It's like,

1:02:41 Audience member
Everyone can sing, I know that.

1:02:44 Hannah Catherine Jones
Yes. So it's, I think it's kind of ironic, because I'm sitting here privileging the thing that I am trying to destabilise, but ultimately, like, there is an essence of it that won't leave me,

won't leave us alone.

1:02:58 Audience member
It's that finding of the voice though isn't it, understanding that's who you are. You're not Mariah. Yeah. Or you're not Madonna. You've got your own thing? Yeah, it's finding that within you. Exactly. That's what it is for me.

1:03:10 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's such a great point. Thank you for that. Yeah,

1:03:14 Celine Condorelli
But part of the work. I mean, from my side, the understanding of destabilising something like opera, also, I think points to opera, it's not just an experience, it's also a funding system, hierarchies of what is valuable music as opposed to not valuable music, sets of rules as to who is able to go, I mean, I've never, I've never been able to face the price that an opera ticket costs to go to the National Opera in London, I've lived there for 30 years, I've never been, but I know that the opera house in London gets more funding than all of the contemporary art institutions together, right. So you know, that the capacity to understand how much funding goes towards, in a way, you know, continuing a genre that has been going for so long, and the work of people who have been dead for many, many years when there's no funding for you, you know, at some point, there's also you know, those questions also come it's quite hard not to look at it like that as well. So I for me, destabilising opera and disseminating these kinds of genres of high culture also comes with the practicalities of how people actually are able to continue working and producing content.

1:04:32 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's super important. And, you know, the, yeah,

1:04:37 Audience member
I'm just thinking about opera and classical music. I love all

music, but there is something potentially about it being in another language. I don't know if it's sung in Latin or Italian.

1:04:48 Hannah Catherine Jones
Italian.

1:04:49 Audience member
And there's something about that that is beautiful and romantic. And with that comes potential status and the people that potentially enter to go and see that - I can't imagine going to see opera sung in English, and it potentially having the same effect. I might be ignorant. I don't know. But there's something about hearing it in another language, which just makes me go, oh, beautiful.

1:05:11 Hannah Catherine Jones
I think for, for me, that's a really interesting point again, it's like, so when you, it's like the voice in song is different to the voice in speech, because when you're hearing someone talk, you can't really hear like the timbre of the voice because you, it's, the meaning gets in the way. Do you know what I mean? So if I was just kind of going ahhhhh, you could hear a lot more of like, maybe my voice sounds more mellow, or what do they call that, a glottal stop like that. Yeah, guttural, you'd be able to tell all these kinds of things that you, like, you wouldn't be able to hear because of the words. And then when you add pitch into that, everything changes, and breath and vibrations and all that stuff. And then when you've got, you know, a language that you can't speak, like Italian or Latin or whatever, then you're more able to focus on it as this instrument rather than what it's actually saying. Yeah, so it is like,

1:06:23 Celine Condorelli
When I was looking at the the opera fragment, I was actually thinking something along those lines that I mean, I speak Italian, I'm Italian, I can't understand it. Sorry. I cannot understand it. But it also reminded me of how, like many people who don't have English as a first language, I grew up

with music I did not understand, I grew up with all the songs that everybody in the world grows up with in English, a lot of them, as music, you just don't understand them. It's only later after a few years of living here, because it's not that easy to understand the singing voice, right. But a few years of living here, there was like, at some point, little by little I would be able to listen to the songs as like, oh, that's what they're saying, you know, understanding how some things are totally despicable, for example, there are songs that you've loved since you were a teenager or something like this. But that relationship is really funny no, because for native English speakers, it's always hilarious how foreigners would know songs without knowing any of the meaning and might even know them by heart, you know, be able to sing them having phonetically learned them phonetically, of course, but in a way, it's not that dissimilar to the experience of listening to opera of course, because okay, it's in Italian. If you don't have a libretto, no Italian speaker would actually understand - they might get some words, but you don't actually understand it. So the libretto is key in terms of meaning, but it's not the same experience as the experience of listening.

1:07:53 Hannah Catherine Jones
100% But at the same time, you know, she's not singing about something that's joy,

1:07:58 Celine Condorelli
You get something you get meaning, but you don't get words. I mean, it's really interesting. You get meanings, the meaning that goes through that other meaning. Exactly.

1:08:08 Hannah Catherine Jones
It's so sort of, yeah, layered, and yeah, we've kind of moved away from the and then we got another question here after that as well. Yeah.

1:08:18 Audience member
Maybe there's different I think there's different levels of

listening as well, because I think sometimes like, we all know a song, but we don't know the words, but we know it. And there's something about the feeling of it. And we could have listened to that song for years, and get to 2025 and then go, oh, that really resonates with me, or, what the hell am I singing?

1:08:41 Hannah Catherine Jones
It reminds me that video of the, oh my god, should, is this even relevant?

1:08:46 Celine Condorelli
I think there was a question.

1:08:48 Hannah Catherine Jones
I'll hold that for after I will chat to you after. Don't apologise at all, thanks for your contributions.

1:08:54 Audience member
As I'm Italian too, and I agree on what you said - it's not about the language. I'm Italian, And I find it quite difficult sometimes too and I love opera, but I find it very difficult to understand all the words. Yeah. I can understand probably the meaning of what they're saying. But yeah, so it's not about the language I agree with you 100%. Yeah, and also, you were saying about the Royal Opera House in London. When I used to live in London, there were some like promotions online to go and get cheaper tickets. Whereas in Italy now they do like a discount in Milan for La Scala every Sunday to attract people to go and see the opera, I think, it would be a good idea to do that in England too, you know, to attract more audience for opera because, you know, we can lose opera through the years. Maybe I don't know.

1:09:58 Hannah Catherine Jones
Yeah, I mean I'm kind of like, talking so much about opera. But I guess that's what happens when we both play something that incorporated the operatic as a, that's the thing towards

it as well. Because when I think about making art or making a kind of artistic experience, the kind of, it still does loom over there, this kind of, because opera in Italian, correct me if I'm wrong, means work or labour.

1:10:25 Celine Condorelli
There's just more work. There's more distinctions in Italian than.

1:10:28 Hannah Catherine Jones
Could you offer a translation because you are a native speaker?

1:10:33 Celine Condorelli
Operaio, is a factory worker.

1:10:34 Hannah Catherine Jones
There we go.

1:10:35 Celine Condorelli
Yeah, but opera is both the labour and the great oeuvre. Okay, so there is no distinction between high and low.

1:10:46 Hannah Catherine Jones
But that's so fascinating, because one of the reasons I'm like vocal labour opera is because of that, that root of the word meaning to do with the work, the production, that's what they call it, an opera production, and you've got the orchestra, you've got the chorus, you've got the people that build the props, you've got the people that the scenery like, It's labour intensive. Yeah, it's like, it's, it's on that scale. And then you get this kind of, you know, this experience that involves, like visual elements, the sound elements, and the, you know, these sort of design and experience. So when considering making an art show, it's kind of like, there's always going to be little elements of that, including, you know, you have this curtain, which is printed with the kind of texture vegetable dye, with vegetable dye, which kind of, you know, it resonates, and it is inspired by

the way that the octopus shifts and changes its colour. And that curtain is on a timer, which is also connected to the lights, which is connected to the music, which has all these objects. So it's kind of like, you know, there is, it's not just kind of like being like, oh, yeah, opera is like, all these elements make up this experience. And I guess, it's like, a big shift from what we expect, which is like these red velvet seats, and like, a diva in there and a big dress. It's like these elements that you know, are present in this form of artwork that gives like this affecting experience. So it's not too wild that we're talking about opera at all, I guess.

1:12:27 Celine Condorelli
No, yeah, maybe to. To finish on this subject. There is a really beautiful letter between Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt, when Hannah Arendt was working on The Life of the Mind, there is a whole section on work, trying to understand the difference between work and labour. And I think Mary McCarthy is in Italy, and she goes through all the different words that exist in Italian to differentiate between different forms of work, labour, etc. You know, like in English labour is also birth, the labour of birth. In Italian there's travaglio, do there's like all these other distinctions, and trying to understand why there would be a language with so many different ways of explaining work effectively. It's very beautiful. What's the name of the essay, again? It's a letter, it's one of their letters, I can send it to you.

1:13:17 Hannah Catherine Jones
What's it, what's the name of it just for anyone else.

1:13:20 Celine Condorelli
So there was a, I wish I remember, that there was one book published of their letters they wrote to each other for 25 years. So it's very much the story of their friendship. And they worked for each other as well, in the sense of each one helped the other one develop their work. Even though one was a novelist, Mary McCarthy was a novelist and Hannah Arendt a

political theorist, or philosopher, depending how you want to say, and these 25 years of letter are condensed into a volume that was published maybe about 10 years ago. Very beautiful, sort of bringing these letters together from Hannah Arendt's archive, which is in Bard College, in upstate New York, where she's buried actually. It's like a lifetime of a friendship, no.

1:14:08 Hannah Catherine Jones
Beautiful. Any more questions?

1:14:14 Audience member
I've almost forgot what I was going to say. But yeah, I just feel that people are like octopus, in a sense, you know, we have a very high state, or some people have a very high state of awareness. You know, how our brain is linked to 1000s and 1000s of nerves in our body. And going back to the music thing, it's a frequency thing, isn't it? You know, you can feel it. And I think some people like musicians, I guess, are attuned. And they tune into that they connect with that frequency or those frequencies and have a an ability, if you like to, you know, to be more sensitised to it. And then I think perhaps I do feel myself, I'm not a musician at all. But when I listen to certain tracks and music, it kind of takes over my body. It's not just a case of listening to music, but you feel the music. And I'm not sure whether listening to it or feeling it, you know, which one gives you the greater sensory kind of feedback, if you like, and reaction? And does that feedback potentially give you that creativity? Does it you know, does it spur you on? And does it give you that, you know, creativity. So what I'm saying is, it's not just a case of hearing the music, it's feeling it and being in the music itself and totally connected to it, then it suddenly creates and causes some kind of a flow, you know, an awareness.

1:15:56 Hannah Catherine Jones
That's so spot on. And it's almost like I was in a roundabout way trying to get to that when I was playing the Arvo Part piece where I was like, I know that I absorbed this. And I know

it was because I learned to conduct in six through conducting that and I can still do it. And I can still remember who three had to point at my friend who was playing the bell because the bell comes on the fourth B. And I had to point at her because she's an untrained musician. And that's important that the Peckham Chamber Orchestra involves people who are not trained as musicians, because that's also breaking down the hierarchies and stuff like that. But going through all those unritualised and ritualised moments of working with that piece, and know I absorbed it, not just like you say, through my ears, through my body.

1:16:43 Audience member
It is yeah, through your nervous system, you know, and I think that stimulates your brain in turn, and it's a circular thing, you know, and it heightens your, you suddenly become different. It's almost like a drug, you know, so you just because it is a drug, and you become different, and it stimulates your brain. And so it goes on, you know, because we all know our skin, and our bodies have a degree of sensitivity, and that sensitivity will increase and change. You know, it goes back to the octopus, you know, we all are, that is an incredible thing, how the octopus can change its skin, even though it's only got one eye, isn't it? How can it see behind itself? How does it know what the environment actually looks like when it's actually behind it? Does it feel the environment? Does it actually map it's environment out and remember what it looks like?

1:17:41 Celine Condorelli
It thinks through the skin.

1:17:42 Audience member
Exactly. This is exactly my point. It's not just an octopus that does that. We do that as well. You rest assured, that's what we do. I believe so anyway, you know, we are sensitive. We are sensitive to light. We are sensitive to heat, many, many different things, not just through our eyes and our ears as

we you know, it's through our skin as well. We feel it. We can sense things, we know things are there, when we can't even see them for example, you know, we can feel things. And our nervous system is an extension of our brain. It feeds back the information.

1:18:23 Hannah Catherine Jones
I guess the the main difference is that we don't change our appearance based on experiencing that. Whereas, you know, that's for me, that's like the real fascination. Thank you. Thank you. Well, yeah, I mean, maybe it's time to stop, yeah, I'm aware of time. Maybe like any more questions, anyone? Thank you for your questions. Thank you so much. Yeah, thank you.

1:19:01 Canan Batur
Anyone has any more questions, or shall we? Okay. Yeah, I mean, a round of applause again, because that was kind of like halfway right, like, thank you so much. Thank you for your contributions today and that conversation. And for those who want to trace back some of these gems that has been shared this evening, the recording will be available in the next few weeks. So do keep your eyes on our socials and our website. So thank you so much for joining us today. Again, one last round of applause for yeah, thank you so much.

Colophon

Curator: Canan Batur
Assisted by: Helen Hamilton and Shannon Charlesworth
Technicians: Jim Brouwer and Tom Chamberlain
Assisted by: Nieve O'Donnell