Music on the Edge presents:

Devon Osamu Tipp: New Music for Shakuhachi and Electroacoustic Sound
October 23rd, 2021 – Bellefield Hall Auditorium, University of Pittsburgh
* indicates premiere performance

Susuwatari ススワタリ (2020) Devon Osamu Tipp

Susuwatari is a short composition inspired by the fleeting black soot sprites seen in Hayao Miyazaki films My Neighbor Totoro となりのトトロ and Spirited Away 千と千尋の神隠し. Susuwatari are described and shown as tennis ball-sized, pitch-black and fuzzy-haired beings with two large eyes and long, thin limbs. They move by hovering around, but they can extend stick-like limbs from their bodies to do certain tasks and can lift objects many times their own weight. They make a squeaky murmuring sound when excited, and dissolve into powder (soot) if crushed.

Shadow Shuttle (2021)* Jason Belcher

This work is part of an ongoing series dedicated to Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh-Adjacent neighborhoods and townships. Part of the Penn Hills municipality, Shadow Shuttle is a hillside enclave overlooking I-376 between Churchill and Monroeville. I’ve never been there. The piece was composed daily over a two-week period on 14 lines of Carta landscape score paper. The performer has the option of re-ordering select lines. Some are notated traditionally, while others make use of verbal descriptions in an effort to alter recurring material. A second draft was made in September, also on Carta landscape paper, with a broad-nibbed Kaweco fountain pen.

Ought to Be (2021)* Emmanuel Berrido

"Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence...the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake.” - George Washington, 1796 Farewell Address.

The third piece on a series of pieces inspired by Kathy Brahney’s “A Modern Bestiary,” Ought to Be gets its title from a small excerpt from George Washington’s 1796 farewell address, which appears in Kathy’s painting, “The Elephant.” Just as I did with other pieces in this series, I do not intend to comment on the sociopolitical events that inspired Kathy’s work, but rather wanted to have the idea of “influence” be the guiding force of this piece.

In this sense, in Ought to Be various forces are at play — not only are the two sections of the work influenced by one another, but also there’s the influence of the technicalities of the shakuhachi over the musical ideas, and because of the collaborative nature of this project, the influence of the performer over the composer and vice versa.

Ought to Be is dedicated to Devon Osamu Tipp and Kathy Brahney with all my admiration and gratitude.

Probable No. 42 (2021)* Ramin Akhavijou

Probable is a collection of compositions in which the performer is involved in the creative process where collaboration is required in some parts. The composer, also as a researcher working on the concept of “music perception,” tries to place the performer’s taste, opinion, intelligence, experience, and sensibility into the pieces as a rich source of perception and sees
this contribution as going beyond the definition of experimental music. *Probable* changes the conventional performance sequence of reading-comprehension-preparation-production and guides performers through their own set of tasks, which are plainly unique to each performer. As a result, there might be an unlimited number of ways to complete this sequence.

*Too Soon, Gone from Here* (2021) **Nicole Mitchell**

---Intermission---

*The Shadow is What We Hear* (2020) **Lu-Han Li**

*The Shadow is What We Hear* is a piece for solo shakuhachi with electronic music that comprises improvisational and notated elements. Musical shadows haunt our ears even when the tones are no longer there. They linger, creating shadows in our ears and our minds, even in silence. This piece explores these “musical shadows” by blurring the space between performers and the audience.

*Pale Blue Dot (In Honour of Mr. Sagan)* (2019) **Devon Osamu Tipp**

*Pale Blue Dot* was composed while an Artist in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh’s Department of Astrophysics and Cosmology. While in residence I collaborated with stellar astrophysicist Dr. Carles Badenes and shakuhachi player and composer Elizabeth Brown. The resulting composition was *Pale Blue Dot*.

When a star reaches the end of its life cycle, after it has burned through all its fuel, the core of a star collapses into a neutron star, and all but the newly formed neutron star is blown away at speeds in excess of 50 million km/h, and lighter elements are fused into heavier ones. This massive release of energy is a supernova. To use Dr. Badenes’ words, “The iron in our blood and the calcium in our bones were formed billions of years ago in supernovae that exploded before the Solar System was formed. This massive recycling scheme powered by supernovae seeds the birthplaces of stars with the raw materials that are necessary for life.” In effect, we are all cosmic stardust.

My composition *Pale Blue Dot* explores the idea “we are all cosmic stardust” through shakuhachi solo and fixed media. The shakuhachi represents the Voyager Spacecraft traveling through the cosmos. The electronic sounds you hear are from pre-recorded samples of that have been processed and time stretched beyond recognition.

*MONSTER* (2021) **Mark Micchelli**

For shakuhachi and live processing

- *I.* body taut thin, thick of skin
- *II.* all skin, no heart
- *III.* all spine, no head
- *IV.* minimal mind yet nonetheless
- *V.* a life, this

*monster:* from Latin monstrum (derived from monere: to inform, to admonish, to warn) = something extraordinary or divine, contrary to nature, a portent; something in violation of nature that can serve as a caution or warning; the appearance, the manifestation, the sudden
revelation of a divine or portentous sign; an omen that excites a sense of marvel or wonder, that might be auspicious or inauspicious, reassuring or fearful.
(text by Paul D’Agostino)

I. body taut thin, thick of skin
II. all skin, no heart
III. all spine, no head
IV. minimal mind yet nothingness
V. a life, this