

# The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

presents

## Sounds Modern

performing

### ***Echo or Agent?***

### ***The Mirror of Disembodied Sound***

Saturday, April 15, 2023, 2:00 pm

Modern Art Museum auditorium

### **Program**

***Self-Seed*** (2012) Rachel Yoder

from ***Multiple Portables*** (2021-23) Eric Wong

*#8: Accumulated Minimum*

***Silbertöne*** (2013) Seth Shafer

— intermission —

***Retake*** (2001) Andrew May and Elizabeth McNutt

]: ***This Piece*** :| (2019) Mark Vaughn

***surfaceNetwork*** (2019) Elizabeth A. Baker

***Oh Lou, we are all your mirrors now*** (1965/2023) Lou Reed / Stephen Lucas / Andrew May

### **Musicians**

Sarah Ruth Alexander, voice and electronics

Mia Detwiler, violin

Garrison Gerard, trumpet

Stephen Lucas, piano and electronics

Andrew May, violin and electronics (Sounds Modern assistant director)

Charlotte MacDonald, clarinet

Elizabeth McNutt, flute (Sounds Modern director)

Alex Ravitz, clarinet

Jess Schury, flute

Justin Weis, euphonium and electronics

## Notes

From the early days of radio to the most sophisticated interactive computer music, sound coming from loudspeakers has always raised disconcerting questions: what is real, what is imaginary? what comes from the physical world, what is purely electronic? Is there someone or something listening and responding to us? All of these questions have only grown in complexity with new technologies. In *Echo or Agent?*, we reflect the artistic possibilities explored in the Modern's current exhibition, *I'll Be Your Mirror*, through musical works in which disembodied sound reframes the relationships between instruments, voices, and environment, as well as between composers, performers, and audience. The mirror of disembodied sound coming from loudspeakers complements the visual mirrors of screens and cameras, framing new relationships between people in a world where our senses of reality, presence, and communication are constantly questioned.

Composer-clarinetist Rachel Yoder writes of *Self-Seed* that “during the challenges of the pandemic I found comfort both through gardening and in the writings of the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. He describes positive and negative emotions or thoughts as seeds that we can cultivate or not at our own choosing. This idea brought to my mind plants that can self-seed, constantly dying and regrowing. *Self-Seed* is a clarinet duo in which the two parts represent two different “selves”; an interaction between the ‘worst self’ -- detuned, angry, and anxious -- and ‘best self,’ a source of love and light. The ‘best self’ attempts to calm and comfort the ‘worst self,’ allowing the fruits of negativity to wither and die back, so love can flourish.”

***Multiple Portables #8: Accumulated Minimum*** is one of a series of multi-channel audio pieces to be played back with multiple mobile devices, using their internet connections and built-in speakers. In this performance, audience members are invited to participate as performers! Scan the QR code on the right with your phone to find the web page for this performance, and follow the instructions there.



***Silbertöne*** is a reworking of material from Franz Schubert's song “Ständchen” from *Schwanengesang*. The title is derived from a stanza in the song (from a poem of Ludwig Rellstab):

*Sie verstehn des Busens Sehnen,  
Kennen Liebesschmerz,  
Rühren mit den Silbertönen  
Jedes weiche Herz.*

Which translates to:

*[The nightingales] understand the heart's longing,  
know the pain of love,  
they calm each tender heart  
with their silver tones.*

*Silbertöne* was composed for the California State Long Beach Laptop Ensemble for theatrical performance at La Mama Spoleto Open, Spoleto Due Mondi Festival 2013 under the direction of Brian Byungkoo Ahn and Martin Herman. - Seth Shafer

**Retake** is an improvisation by flutist and computer together, both responding to a third presence: a transformed version of an improvisation Elizabeth McNutt recorded in Berkeley in 2000. During the performance, the flutist can "retake" any of twenty-one places in the recorded improvisation by moving a pedal, reshaping the form of the old improvisation to suit the moment. Several computer-generated virtual "performers" listen to both the live and recorded improvisations (sometimes paying more attention to one or the other) and play along, using flute samples, percussion sounds, and synthesized tones. Like the players in an improvising ensemble, these virtual personae range from imitators to mavericks. - Andrew May

|: **This Piece** :|

|: This piece represents :|: This piece is a product of :| my intentions, my explorations, and my experiences |: This piece involves :|: This piece uses :| processes and techniques | developed through my intentions, my explorations, and my experiences :|| - Mark Vaughn

**surfaceNetwork** is a conceptual work for any ensemble with working cellular phones or any other portable future communication devices with visual messaging technology. It is an iteration of *SURFACE STUDIES*, a series of works that consider the nature of three-dimensional objects represented through various two-dimensional mediums such as paper, carbon-paper, phone screens, and monitors of varying resolutions. In this work, within guidelines stated in the score, performers text each other photographs of surfaces, and in turn interpret photos sent to them by other players.

**Oh, Lou, we are all your mirrors now** is a reflection on the folkways of music in the digital age. Lou Reed wrote *I'll Be Your Mirror*, the Velvet Underground song from which the Modern's exhibition takes its title, in 1965, inspired by the comment "Oh, Lou, I'll be your mirror," made by German chanteuse and model Nico. Many others have covered the song since it was released in 1966; their versions reflect Reed's song in the light of their own identities and styles. This rendition, inspired by Molly Soda's *Me Singing "Stay" by Rihanna* in the Modern's exhibit, brings twenty versions of the song into the same tempo, structure, and key, to frame a live interpretation of the song by Sarah Ruth Alexander. Careful synchronization and processing of source tracks (done mostly by Stephen Lucas) merges many singers into a ragged choir mirroring the structure, harmony and melody of Reed's song. Individual voices fuse into a single folkloric identity; you might not even hear or recognize any of them, as the "choir" will be mixed live in performance, while the live chanteuse responds in real-time to the identities brought forward in the mix.

(verse 1) *I'll be your mirror, reflect what you are, in case you don't know  
I'll be the wind, the rain, and the sunset  
The light on your door to show that you're home*

(chorus) *When you think the night has seen your mind  
That inside, you're twisted and unkind  
Let me stand to show that you are blind  
Please put down your hands 'cause I see you*

(verse 2) *I find it hard to believe you don't know the beauty you are  
But if you don't, let me be your eyes  
A hand to your darkness so you won't be afraid*

(fade-out chorus) *I'll be your mirror  
(reflect what you are) ...*

## **Sounds Modern**

The most up-to-the-minute and least predictable concert music series in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Sounds Modern has been exploring links between contemporary music and visual arts for over a decade. Conceived and directed by virtuoso flutist Elizabeth McNutt in collaboration with The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Sounds Modern adds a sonic dimension to the ideas represented in the galleries, and brings the artwork to life in the concert hall. McNutt also directs the Nova new music ensemble at the University of North Texas, where she teaches in the flute and composition areas. Sounds Modern assistant director Andrew May is on the UNT composition faculty.

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to the Nova Ensemble, the University of North Texas College of Music, and John Nuckels for contributing to this performance. Thanks also to Tina Gorski and John Nuckels for collaborating with us since 2007 to bring new sounds to the Modern. Our next concert, celebrating the art of Robert Motherwell in the Modern's *Pure Painting* exhibition, will be September 16, 2023. Keep up with the latest Sounds Modern news at [www.soundsmodern.org](http://www.soundsmodern.org), [www.facebook.com/SoundsModern](http://www.facebook.com/SoundsModern), and on Twitter and Instagram @soundsmodern.