Listening to the Acousmatic

A Thesis

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By

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Abstract

From 2005 to 2009 I was an associate professor teaching at the Toyama City Institute of Glass Art in Toyama, Japan. Living for four years in a foreign country where I was, even after four years of learning to speak and read Japanese, relatively illiterate, and so unable to read most of the 50,000 or more Kanji characters has transformed store front signage, posters, street signs, magazine ads and articles into pure imagery for me. Being illiterate has sparked my interests in the translation, and the misinterpretation, of words and images, their meanings, and how they are used in various forms of communication. I use this observation as inspiration to combine sculptural components with audio fragments to create reductive listening experiences.

Musique concrète is a form of electroacoustic music that utilizes acousmatic sound as a compositional resource. The compositional material is not restricted to the sounds derived from musical instruments or voices, nor to elements traditionally thought of as ‘musica’ (melody, harmony, rhythm, meter, and so on).

The work explored in this thesis project explores creating sound-based compositions known as musique concrète. These works are intended to be listened to in an intimate, distraction-free setting, by one person at a time. The works described here involve the mono-track recording of individual sounds with a handheld digital recorder and mixing them into stereo and surround sound compositions using Logic Studio & Max.
MSP software. These are to be experienced in a variety of interactive sculptures, though listening devices that include hanging stadium speakers, encapsulated blown-glass environments, flat glass panels and surround sound studios.
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Vita

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Exhibitions & Publications

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Urban Arts Space
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2011................................................................. Neues Glass Review 32
Corning Museum of Glass
Corning, New York

2010................................................................. Emerge 2010 Exhibition
Bullseye Glass Gallery
Portland, Oregon

2010................................................................. Hot Glass 2010
Toledo, Ohio

2009................................................................. Solar Mixer Installation
Furusawa Machi, Japan

2008................................................................. Permanent Collection
Toyama Glass Museum,
Toyama City, Japan

2007................................................................. Pause Trajectories
Solo Exhibition
Furusawa Kobo Gallery,
Furusawa, Japan

Fields of Study

Major Field: Art
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Sound-Based Perspective

Often surprised, often uncertain, we discover that much of what we thought we were hearing, was in reality only seen, and explained, by the context.

Pierre Schaeffer

In 2005 I was offered and accepted a job in Toyama, Japan. The Toyama City Institute of Glass Art hired me based on my professional experience. I was going to be an associate professor teaching glass. The job was half way around the world. I didn’t speak or read Japanese. I definitely couldn’t decipher anything that I was listening to when Japanese people in my Seattle neighborhood spoke. Whenever I listened to people speaking it looked as if they had stopped using their lips to say words. Their mouths seemed closed while they talked. The language seemed to come from only their tongues moving inside their stationary mouths. I have always had a problem listening outside of my immediate 10-foot radius, due in part to operating machinery and enjoying loud music. But I have at least been able to read lips and get the gist of what someone was saying if they were not in close proximity to my ear. Deciphering Japanese, however, seemed impossible. It was not a Latin-based language and seemed impossible to break the sounds into parts and find the root meanings of words. The talents that I had relied on
to translate French, Spanish, or Italian were obviously not going to be of any use to me now. Especially if their lips were hardly moving.

I set out to find an affordable Japanese language class in Seattle before I had to move across the world. The cheapest Seattle price I could find was $80 an hour. At that price all bets were off. I thought to myself that I probably needed at least 100 hours of language class to make myself feel more comfortable with moving everything that I owned to a place I had only seen in movies and never visited before. My schedule was such that I taught classes in Tacoma up until five days before I left the country. Time seemed like something I didn’t have much of, even though I had a few months before I stepped onto that plane headed to the other side of the pacific. The cost per hour to learn Japanese was expensive. I opted for a cheaper alternative: the Rosetta Stone Japanese language set. I thought it would give me far more bang for my buck. Especially since my work schedule didn’t match any of the times that the hourly classes were offered. So I opted for convenience. Having the ability to throw a DVD into my computer as I lay in bed late at night seemed like the best option for me at the time. The tutorials were thorough and interactive but a little robotic and emotionless. For the next month I spent a few hours a night attempting to learn Japanese. The day came to board the plane. I felt unprepared but at ease. I took a few sleeping pills to cope with the 15-hour flight.

The stewardess shook my shoulder to awaken me for what I thought was dinner. However I had slept the entire flight and awoke on the Tokyo runway after we had landed. Anxiety set in immediately. I didn’t have a chance to meditate and prepare during the flight. It was as if I had stepped through a time portal and just appeared in Tokyo. Of
course that would be the ultimate way to travel, but I was expecting a little more time for running hypothetical situations through my head as I stared out the window during the flight. The Rosetta stone set had momentarily quelled my anxiety before getting on the plane, but after arriving in Japan it was an entirely different ball game. There were so many variables the DVDs didn’t account for. Japanese people come in all different shapes and sizes and are not robotic and emotionless like my DVD tutorials. They speak much faster, and their sentences seemed to be one continuous word. There were no designated breaks or commas. Various dialects and slang from various regions of the country converged in the streets of Tokyo, which made it seem as if every individual were speaking their own version of their language, and none was the one I had attempted to learn on Rosetta Stone. The tutorials taught the dictionary form of the language, not what was used in everyday life. Sentences spoken had been chopped and cut and merged with other chopped and cut sentences. My brain began to shut down as I attempted to process everything coming at me. I was attempting to decipher the many variations of this new language I was surrounded by. Yet there was also an overwhelming visual element to Tokyo that was not allowing me isolate the auditory for analysis. “The natural standpoint must be overcome if we are ever to uncover the grounding of our musical practices. By bracketing out the physically subsisting fact-world, by allowing us to make no judgements in relation to it, and by leaving us only with perceptual experience in itself, hearing can no longer be characterized as a subjective deformation in relation to external things. Listening becomes a sphere of investigation containing its own immanent logic structure and objectivity.” (Schaeffer 1966: 92)
Tokyo is one of the most amplified cities I’ve ever been to. I would compare it to being locked inside a pinball machine. Blank space is a rare commodity in the Tokyo cityscape, and I honestly think there is no empty visual space left. If there is a blank space now, there will be an advertisement or neon sign constructed to fill it soon. If a space is focused on advertisement, an enormous LED television is likely hung on to the side of the building. The choice for advertisers is no longer about owning or renting the actual space, but about the duration of time you can afford to keep the advertisement flashing on screen before the image morphs into the next advertisement. The audio and visual facets of the cityscape are multidimensional and ever changing. Speakers hung over every shop’s doorway announce everything from this week’s featured flavor of ramen noodles to the latest release of electronic gadgets. As you walk the sidewalks, bull horns broadcast pachinko parlor specials as you are simultaneously barraged by cute girls selling cell
phone package deals. The soundtrack of your immediate surroundings changes with every 10 footsteps you take. For brief moments, the soundtrack behind you overlaps with one in front of you. There is every possible color, shape, and size of neon signage you could imagine, and they all exist within inches of one another, infinitely stretching in every direction on every building of every street as far as the eye can see.

It goes without saying that no tutorial DVD set could prepare anyone for this type of audio-visual hallucination or sensory overload. I momentarily felt defeated. I couldn’t speak, read or understand any languages being spoken around me. I was exhausted and decided to take a few seconds to myself and sit on a bench outside Shibuya Station. I closed my eyes to take a break from the pinball machine I found myself locked inside. After a few moments, everything began to settle. With my eyes closed, I felt like I was beginning to hear a completely new soundtrack to the environment. The soundscape’s energy suddenly had a more unified pulse and emotion. Sounds became disconnected from their sources and began to blend into one another, creating a completely different experience altogether. Sounds were transforming into other sounds, and their identities becoming unidentifiable. The soundscape seemed to organize itself with an inherent sense of timing. Yet it maintained an ever-changing spontaneity. At moments it felt predictable but never so much so that it gave you a an understanding of what was about to transpire, or what might be heard a few seconds later.

Michel Chion (paraphrasing Schaeffer) writes: “Ou 'ir, is to perceive with the ear; to be struck by sounds, it is the lowest, most elementary level of perception; one passively 'hears' many things that one neither seeks nor listens to (e 'couter) nor understands
“Ou ĵir is a disinterested and inattentive mode of passive listening that merely receives globally what is given in perception. On the other hand, entendre represents a mode of listening that actively selects, appreciates and responds to particular attributes of sounds. ‘Entendre, is, according to its etymology, to manifest an intention to listen, to select from what we hear (ou ĵir) that which particularly interests us, to effect a “qualification” of that which we hear’. Unlike e´couter or comprendre, entendre and ou ĵir do not seek beyond the sound itself to discover an external object; they come into view only when the sonic sign has been reduced to the sphere of pure immanence.” (Chion 1983: 25)

Eventually I found a new way to listen by listening to “everything” at the same time. I surrendered, probably from exhaustion, to the moment. I wasn’t deciphering signage or translating words into understandable meanings. I wasn’t attempting to get anything accomplished, think about the next thing I should say, or even what I thought about being potentially lost. Definition had been removed from sound, and sound became something else entirely. I actually felt like I was listening to “that” moment. I no longer needed to be processing information coming at me as I had been trained to do my entire life, and it was extremely inspirational.
Figure 2: Signage of Tokyo, Japan, Robert Lewis 2005
The Glass

“And so it is with all other materials. In speaking of good material we are paying an unconscious tribute to the enormous strength of the traditions or workmanship still shaping the world even now (and still largely unwritten). We talk as though good material was found instead of being made. It is good only because the workmanship has made it so. Good workmanship will make something better out of pinchbeck than bad will out of gold. Corruptio optimi pessima! (Corruption of the best is the worst of all) Some materials promise far more than others but only the workman can bring out what they promise.”

David Pye

I have worked with molten glass for the past 18 years. From the moment I touched it in 1993 in Rochester New York, I knew what I was doing for the rest of my life. In this day and age, it seems people are becoming obsolete in their jobs at an alarming rate. The idea that it might take a lifetime to learn this material was, and still is, very attractive to me. My own history of creating artwork with glass began, quite typically, the same way that most people learned centuries ago. Techniques practiced daily have been handed down verbally from glass masters to their apprentices for centuries as they worked side by side in factories or workshop. Glass has a long history as a functional craft-based decorative art form.

One aspect of glass blowing that I studied is based on a Venetian style of glass blowing still used today on the island of Murano, Italy. This style of working is very blue
collar. Three people usually work on a glass blowing bench at a time. One is considered a master craftsman or maestro. The other two are the maestro’s assistants. Glass blowing is most productive when executed by a team. Teams can have as few as two people or as many as twenty people if needed. I have worked in teams of 15 on larger projects. The team works together to achieve a common goal, always taking its direction from the maestro, who is usually the oldest and most experienced craftsperson on the team. The assistants help to facilitate extra tasks that may need to happen simultaneously while the maestro’s own hands are preoccupied working on a piece of glass. The assistants become his extra sets of hands. This allows him to accomplish far more intricacy with the glass than if he were working alone. The Venetian style of glass making has traditionally been used to make wine goblets, bowls, plates, vases, chandeliers and rondel (round elements) windows you would find in stained glass windows.

It wasn’t until I arrived in Seattle in the late 1990s that I came into contact with artists thinking about glass in different ways. Up to that point my understanding of glass originated from craft. To this day it is a still a major starting point for making my work. It seems to always come back to the basic principle of understanding how to make something by referencing its history as craft. I respect the craft traditions of glass and the way its essential techniques have changed so little from hundreds of years ago.

When I made it to Seattle, the glass market was booming. Dale Chihuly had already begun pushing the envelope of what could be done with the material. Before Chihuly started organizing large teams of glass makers to create some of the largest glass
Figure 3: Robert Lewis Artist in Residence, Tacoma Museum of Glass, Ken Emily 2011

sculptures the world had ever seen, glass making was very limited as to what could be accomplished in a small studio setting. A major factor involved in what small glass studios were making were the limitations associated with the studio itself and the craft person’s physical body. The studio problems involved technical limitations relating to the furnace and equipment size. The craftsperson’s limitations were based on what the human body could physically endure: Gathering the glass from the furnace and carrying it. Continuously turning and shaping a molten wad on the end of a blow pipe without it falling off onto the floor.

One disadvantage to working with glass compared to other materials is that once the process for making something in glass has begun, the object cannot be put down until the
process has finished. It differs drastically from all other artistic forms of expression. When throwing a ceramic pot on a turning wheel, the craftsperson can take a break, walk away and come back to it at a later time. The same idea is true for wood work, painting, basketry, fibers, metal work, and essentially all other media. Those materials and their processes can be momentarily paused due to the materials tactility and stability. If you are creating an object in glass that weighs 20 pounds and takes 2 hours to complete, it is far more physically and mentally taxing than making an object from a material you can put down and take a break from. The mental focus required maintaining a sharpness throughout the process as the physical body becomes exhausted. At a time when most people cross the finish line winded and groggy, a glass craftsman must finish the process with clarity and finesse. All the while fighting the dehydration of one’s body from being in close proximity to the 2000 degree temperatures of the glass furnaces. The entire process involves manipulating a molten material that can only be touched through the use of tools and has never been touched by his/her physical hand.

The process was quite a bit different, however, in an American turn-of-the-century factory setting. That kind of factory likely used molds that the glass was blown into. What has been termed “mold blowing” doesn’t seem to be as physically and mentally taxing to me. Especially when the glass piece arrives at its finished state almost instantaneously after the molten glass has been blown inside a mold. To my knowledge there was no great demand for large-scale glass for centuries and don’t believe that there
Figure 4: *Plate 120, Le Verre et le Cristal, 1883.*

is now. Large-scale glass of that [late 19th-century or early 20th-century?] era seemed to be in demand when architects started designing larger-scale windows for buildings. Those windows were traditionally made by making hand-blown glass cylinders that would later be cut and slumped opened into flat window glass. As the demand for window size increased, the process for making the windows inevitably changed. What was once mouth-blown and handmade became mass produced by machines that were more efficient, more accurate, and inexhaustible. One reason for this was due to limitations of cooling thick large-scale pieces of glass slowly to room temperature at that time. In some cases glass of any substantial thickness may need up to a week to anneal. In a turn of the century factory setting this would never be profitable because it would slow a factories productivity at that time, and it was very hard to do. In this day and age equipment has been modified and customized to allow individual artists to make almost anything to the
specifications they choose. But the physical limitation of one’s body still play a very important part in the process. I think the recent demand for larger-scale glass work comes from a push from the glass craftsman himself. I don’t believe the general public would have even considered the possibilities of blown glass on a monumental scale 20 years ago, and I don’t feel like there is a public demand for it now. I think contemporary large-scale glass sculptures are primarily made up of an assemblage of smaller glass components. As a craftsperson I can understand my own desire to be pushing the envelope of my own limitations in regard to making things beyond my means. For myself, this is an attempt get beyond my physicality, my mortality and my refusal to become obsolete or replaced by a machine. I know there is a small window of opportunity to make large-scale works in glass before my age takes its toll. Creating challengingly large-sized objects in molten glass can be deemed over rated, and it is. But
at this point in my life I accept the personal challenge to push my body to its limit while attempting to maintain a delicate hand. The process helps me to realize my limitations and appreciate more of what I can actually accomplish when I stay centered and focused. By understanding the physics and thermal dynamics of the material in relationship to how my body moves in unison with glass allows me to approach a zen-like state while manipulating the glass I can not touch. This leads me to briefly fantasize that I can outsmart this non thinking material as a means to make whatever I want with it. Glass has so many factual limitations it can be discouraging and disheartening at times to work with, but sometimes it’s nice to bet everything and go for broke. Because those of us infatuated with glass are so often told, from a scientific standpoint, “you can’t do this and you can’t do that.” Therefore sometimes laying it on the line to defy the universe and breaking some of its rules can be far more satisfying than the reward of the actual finished piece of glass itself, especially when you succeed.

As I began to think about issues like language and communication I was determined to find a way to work them out in glass. My first exploration into combining glass and sound happened before I returned to the U.S. I made a four-foot-long sculpture titled “Red Centripetal” that rolled in a 12-foot circle on the floor. As it rolled the glass would begin to resonate from contact with the polished concrete floor and start to hum. The sound would be broadcast from an opening, on the left-hand side of the photo, that is shaped like the end of a horn. As the sculpture rolled it would project its sound directionally, similar to a trumpet. You could here the humming from anywhere, but the
broadcast was the strongest if you were aligned with the more elevated horn shaped side as it passed by you. This work was inspired by the singing bowls used in ceremonies of Buddhist temples I visited in Japan. I would watch monks tap and stroke a leather-wrapped striker around the edges of large bronze bowls. The sound was similar to that of rubbing your finger on the lip of a crystal wine glass. The bronze bowls resonated so intensely, however, that their sound would beginning emitting in physical sound waves that you could feel. If you stood close enough to the bowls at their loudest point, you could swear you were feeling vibrations in the air. I thought about the emission of such sound and how it moved continuously through space, emitting rings of sound in three dimensions. I designed the “Red Centripetal” to simulate that emission. The object radiates from a 360-degree central core similar to a vertebrae, and that core became the
axis from which it would roll. As it rolled, it completed a 12-foot circle while simultaneously broadcasting its tone. This piece started me on my path to incorporating sound into my glass work.

Figure 7: Sarah Gilbert holding glass made during my time as the Artist in Residence at the Tacoma Museum of Glass Residency, Robert Lewis 2011
“Within 24 hours of deciding not to speak, he discovered that he had never truly listened. With no possibility of answering people, he found that instead of planning his next remark, or judging his degree of agreement or disagreement, he was simply listening. For most people, the silent part of conversation isn't really silent at all: their internal voice is judging, assessing, cross-indexing, selecting potential replies, or working out how to impress others or to win the contest that often underpins conversation. I write about the different qualities of listening that exist, and distinguish three dimensions: active-passive, empatheric-critical, and reductive-expansive. Active listening is designed to make the other feel heard, using techniques such as reflection and summarising; passive listening is non-judgmental, akin to the way we listen to music. Empathetic listening is designed to make the other feel emotionally understood; critical listening has conscious filters in place. Reductive listening is selective, discarding whatever's not on-target for the listener's goals; expansive listening is simply curious, open to whatever comes. When speaking is taken out of the equation, all that remains is experiencing the words of others in the here and now.”

Julian Treasure

I am a process- and design-oriented artist working with glass who has recently become inspired by the limitations of the human brain’s ability to filter and decipher content when it is overloaded with many audible sources simultaneously. When we have too much discernible information that needs to be translated at once, momentary
confusion is created. We become unable to distinguish the origins and definitions of sound as they begin to overlap and pile up. Could you detect your friend’s voice through the soundtrack of 5000 commuting people in a subway station during rush hour? Amid any auditory chaos, we begin to listen for something familiar so that we can focus on, and find relief in, the recognizable, like sailors searching for a lighthouse from the deck of a battered ship lost in a stormy sea.

When I came to OSU I knew I wanted to learn about sound and eventually be able to combine sound compositions with glass in some way. It was important for me to use my time at OSU to learn something I knew absolutely nothing about. After spending 18 years working with glass it was important to add another feather to my cap or color to my palette. I had researched which software would be the most intuitive and easiest to learn in order for me to cover the most ground as quickly as possible during my time here. I chose to learn and work with Logic Pro Studio software. For the past two years I began to record, edit, and mix languages and sounds into abstract compositions. This kind of sound composition is known as musique concrète. Musique concrète is a form of electroacoustic music that utilizes concrete sound as a compositional resource and composes it into abstraction. The compositional material is not restricted to the sounds derived from musical instruments or voices, nor to elements traditionally thought of as "musical" (melody, harmony, rhythm, meter, and so on). While making this work, I have been thinking about isolation, transparency, eavesdropping, observation, and the overall misinterpretation of familiar sounds. I have become interested in removing definitions from the words, and the origins from the sounds, that I use to compose these sound
pieces. My intent is to exhibit an auditory emotion that exists within the phenomena of audible chaos. These “sound environments” are a result of simultaneously overlapping multiple languages and sounds to create momentary confusion when listened to. I hope to entice listeners into reductive listening and relinquish their control over attempting to translate the unidentifiable. I want them to find a connection to the emotional content that exists beyond the literal definition and identity of the words and sounds they are hearing.

I set out to make a few compositions that are intended to be listened to one person at a time, in order to simulate the isolation of thoughts inside one’s head and give each viewer an uninterrupted chance to connect with each work. Two of these works, “Atmospheric Pressure” and “Ovation,” exist within the space of handmade clear glass capsules that need to be investigated by using a stethoscope or by placing one’s ear closely to the glass.

I make the physical forms in clear glass because the material is transparent, and has an honest quality about it. When I imply that clear glass has an honest quality to it I am referencing how and why it is used in a laboratory setting. Laboratories use sterilized clear glass hoping to observe purity and record the most accurate deceit free results during experiments. Using clear glass allows me to present this thesis work in a similar way where what you see is what you get. Incorporating the transparent characteristic of the clear glass into this work allows me to present an interior where nothing is hidden. Granting an unobstructed perspective of an interior that may hold nothing but air and sound. Most of the time, sound cannot be physically seen, is relatively invisible, and is usually only recognized by the vibration of our eardrums. The clear glass mimics the invisible/transparent quality of sound that you cannot see, but it also acts as an window or
separator, which I intend as a way to physically replicate what I call “immediate vicinity isolation bubbles” or IVIBs: those zones of imaginary privacy that seem to surround people as they nonchalantly talk about their private concerns in public while using cellular phones. The glass physically separates the interior audio narratives from each other, thereby allowing each composition of musique concrète to coexist in the same exhibition space without detracting from one another. Utilizing this material allows me to build a transparent environment that can diminish, or erase, the audible from the viewer without isolating their visual perspective, thus creating the false sense of privacy that one has inside a phone booth. An exchange of private dialogues take place and where every passerby is witness to the event of that conversation even if they cannot hear it. I am giving the audience permission to penetrate this separating layer and granting them access to a private interior where they can eavesdrop, one person at a time, and indulge a momentary fascination.
Record & Compose

“The age of mechanism, denounced wrongly by Pharisees of spiritualism, is the age of the most inordinate human sensibility. It is not solely a question of machines for making, but of machines for feeling which give to modern man tireless touch, ears and eyes, machines that he can expect to give to him to see, to hear, to touch what his eyes could never have shown him, his ears could never have made him hear; to touch what his hands could never have let him touch. As this enormous puzzle, which knowledge of the exterior world is, composes itself, strengthens itself, verifies itself and finally ‘sets’ into shape, man recognizes himself in it: he finds in it the reflection of his own chemistry, his own mechanisms.”

Pierre Scaefffer

Upon returning to the States, my initial interest was finding someone who could help me figure out how to use the Logic Pro Studio software more proficiently. I had purchased Logic Studio Software while living in Japan but was having a difficult time figuring it out. I could figure out how to make it work, but all of the tutorials I followed were about how to make music. That is not what I was interested in making. I wanted to make abstract noise not music. I enrolled in a music technology class with Professor Marc Ainger, an associate professor in the School of Music, my first quarter at Ohio
Figure 8: *Sample of a Composition in Logic Studio by Robert Lewis 2011*

State. After the first class I knew I was lucky to work with him after the first class. Professor Ainger knew exactly what I was looking for and coincidentally introduced me to Pierre Schaeffer and *musique concrète*. This was exactly what I needed to be exposed to. The ideas I had about composing the sound that I could only explain as existing between the foreground and the background was about to begin falling into place. Although I was not a musician, I could understand what Professor Ainger was talking about. Learning the software however was a completely different language. Professor Ainger taught me how to use Logic Studio and Max MSP. Logic was relatively intuitive but Max MSP was not. I needed to learn a completely different language, similar to that of a programmer, to be able to access what it had to offer. The ideas about the
compositions themselves seemed interesting enough in my initial stages of composing. But then I began to read some of German philosopher Edmund Husserl’s thoughts about what people should take away from the phenomena of sound. He said, “Whether a sound is locked in a groove, looped on a tape, or hallucinated in phantasy, the contingent and constantly varied experience of sound cannot provide a foundation for its qualitative, indicative or communicative aspects. The geometrical drawing, with all of its crooked lines, is like the acoustician’s signal—empirical, inessential, and contingent. As a vehicle to arrive at the sound object, the empirical phenomenon ‘does not really matter’” (Husserl 1928: 55)

As I began to develop my own approach to music concrète I realized that what each listener left with would be their own, and it didn’t necessarily matter if they heard something specific I had intended, because that part of the experience wasn’t what was actually intended. I was just looking for a vehicle to get the listener there to listen to the sounds I was trying to find and bring together. Each composition would be unique to each individual listener and exists in their mind as they listened to the composition based on that individual’s own perceived interpretation. Each interpretation would be different, just as each individual is completely different in background and upbringing, education appreciation and personality. Their listening experience would even be dictated by the compilation of their experiences throughout the day. If their day had been riddled with anxiety, that will most definitely affect their ability to concentrate and listen for the unique experience at that time. I couldn’t expect everyone to hear these works in the
same way. They are intended for the relaxed mindset that’s at rest and open and willing to have expansive listening.

More than likely only a very small percentage of people might actually walk away from the experience with something unique. I’m basically asking the viewer to read in between the lines, or “listen in between the lines” so to speak. By doing this I think I am already at a disadvantage because I am attempting to get people to do something that they are not accustom to doing. I would feel very lucky to have the type of audience that would connect with this type of work. The success of these compositions is based on the listener’s own ability to let go of a sound’s identity, which is something they need to find for themselves. To let their ear find something that is present but un noticed because the identity of the sound is grounding the experience for the listener. So it requires them to spend more time with the work itself. Which isn’t typical of most “art viewers”’ agendas. Most people spend a few minutes with a piece and move on. However this these compositions of music conrète are intended for an audience looking to for an experience, not just a satisfactory moment.
Ear to Ear & 10 Speed Cicada

I was inspired to make “10 Speed Cicada” in 2006 while spending a week in Tokyo. I had travelled there from Toyama to visit a few exhibitions that were taking place at the time. It’s unbearably hot there in August and at times it seems as though the air is so thick the actual city is touching you. It’s smothering in a way I had never felt before. I had purchased a triangular shaped rice snack called Onigiri and made my way to the park to sit in the shade and attempt to cool down. As I got closer to the park, it sounded as if 100 chainsaws and bicycles cogs were running at the same time. The noise was in unison, with random pulses of timing taking place in different locations throughout the park. As I entered the park I couldn’t see where the noise was coming from. It was as if the air itself was the noise. It was an amazing, all-encompassing sound of energy. It gave me goose bumps to listen too while I sat on a bench. Looking at the ground I found a dead cicada close to my foot. At that moment the image and the sound connected in my mind. I understood everything from that moment and felt a little disappointed. There must have been a million synced cicadas humming in the trees of the park. As the humming of various groups of cicadas began, it overlapped the waves of groups that were in mid song and others that were just finishing. And those finishing would soon to repeat the their sound cycle again in a different pulse and time than before. The sound was reflected and echoed from the face of adjacent buildings on the outskirts of the park. This was adding reverb and delay to the actual insect broadcast. It was an unbelievable natural sound. The
auditory hallucination was almost impossible to duplicate. Especially since my mind initially thought it was chainsaws and bicycles. Of course this made absolutely no sense to me at all, but as I couldn’t visually find the source of the noise, my mind accepted it., similar to the way you accept the hum of electricity coming from power stations. You can’t see the electricity but you can hear the buzz. Whether it’s actual electricity or not is a different story.

I decided to simulate a cicada’s sound by recording the clicking of the chain on the derailleur and spinning cogs on the back wheel of my bike. I taped a digital recorder to the lower frame of the bike close enough to pick up the sound from both areas. I recorded the sound as I rode around the block. The recorder had picked up every other possible noise you could think of along the way. The plastic coffee cup cover I had run over, the water draining into the sewer on the corner. It wasn’t what I had hoped for. Being an amateur at this I decided to lock myself in the basement where I could get absolute silence and potentially get a more accurate recording. I flipped the bike over onto its seat and handle bars and began to record the chain as I hand cranked it, simultaneously shifting gears with my other hand. That seemed too concocted and unnatural but inevitably was what needed to be done to get the quality recording I was looking for. I recorded three separate sound files and loaded then into the MaxMSP software. I adjusted the reverb, timing, echo, and delay of all three until it was unidentifiable and had a similar feel to what I experienced in the park in Tokyo. Since I recorded and composed the piece, however, it was almost impossible for me to separate the sound source image from the sound. It takes a much longer duration of time for me to
get to a place within the recording where I actually feel that I can lose myself and surrender to the “entendre.”

The composition seemed complete, and I needed a means to deliver it. My intensions were initially to incorporate sound and glass together for this composition. Unless, of course, a better solution presented itself. I investigated a locked room next to my studio, a secret room where Professor Richard Harned stores his abundant overstock of miscellaneous collected goods. (When God himself needs to borrow something he doesn’t have, he calls Professor Harned. Chances are he has 10 of whatever God would be looking for.) Inside I found two enormous stadium speakers stashed away under about six years of dust. They were hidden between the 1948 Land Rover and the stuffed lion bagged on safari in 1969. It wasn’t very hard for me to imagine this speaker set as the perfect companion to something I might want to play very loud later on. Of course I needed permission to use objects of such power. One cannot wield sound freely without consent from the heavens. I asked and I received.

Before anything could be played through these gems, they needed to be repaired. I researched the speakers, but since their captivity the company that made them had been liquidated. I finally found a company in Hong Kong that made replacement diaphragms for the drivers. The man there informed me that if I wanted to run them on a normal stereo receiver, which was all I could steal from the glass technician’s office, I needed to
build a low pass filter to remove all the bass from the sending signal so that the
diaphragms wouldn’t break again. I found a stereo guru, Chris Miller, to help me build it.

My original intension was to play a “Stereo Duct Tape” sound short I had made
through the speakers. For some reason I felt that the sound didn’t hold the audience’s
attention through the “Vari Intence” speakers. I’d been reading portions of Pierre
Schaeffer’s book *Traite des Objets Musicaux*. The Music Library at Ohio State had an
original copy, and, of course, it was in French. So I’d run sections through my translation
software and get the general idea about what he was saying until I found more accurate
translations on line. Schaeffer talks about “Bracketing out the spatiotemporal causes.”
Immediately I saw the speakers hung and “bracketing” the listener in between them as
they hung. The speakers’ enormous size would block almost all of the listener/viewer’s surrounding view as they stood inside. I thought I could play “10 Speed Cicada” through the hung brackets and the listener would be given the distraction-free, intimate space required for the occasion. The chance to stand between two daunting objects with a potential for massive projection is intimidating to most. Their scale is fierce to me, and I am 6’4”. A level of trust clearly was required from the listener in order for them to enter in between the speakers. They needed to be certain that they will be safe and not have their head blown off with sound. These Altec Lansing horns once announced touchdowns at football games with enough power to, more than likely, update the tailgaters outside the stadium. Using them in a completely different context was important to this sound piece. Such a unique speaker needed to have a unique composition being played through them. Not only was I asking the listener to try to hear something new and normally unheard. I was asking them to give up their fear of the historical association of these loudspeakers. No one in their right mind would stand between a set of stadium horns at full blast, at least not without ear plugs. Utilizing speakers of this magnitude required a little more finesse. To me they were like magnifying glasses. A unique set of head phones would give the listener an opportunity that would otherwise be unavailable to them. I suspended the speakers from the ceiling so they could float just off the floor, and the wires would disappear into the darkened ceiling of the room. Their configuration would be close enough to be enveloping but open enough so that the listener felt free to move unrestrictedly and so could feel absolutely comfortable inside with any foot stance they
chose. (When I enter the space between the speakers, my big shoulders touch either side of the exterior edge unless I turn sideways to enter.)

The hanging speakers allow listeners to enter this work however they like, and they can even move a speaker to the side to allow easier access, since each one moves from and returns to its configured orientation. The speaker horn’s mouth opens up on the inside of the negative space and gives far more room for the listener to move around. I
had initially placed a kindergarten chair inside this piece in an attempt to get the listener to stay longer and dwarf them even more. But the chair dictated too much of the listeners’ experience: if the chair was facing a specific way, most listeners would not change its configuration. Deciding that controlled the experience too rigidly, I removed the chair as an attempt to provide more listening freedom. This piece was displayed in two different locations. The “Clean Space Gallery” in the Sherman Studio Building, and the OSU Urban Arts Space. While the work was exhibited in the “Clean Space Gallery” I noticed similar reactions to the work. In the Clean Space Gallery individual listeners felt relaxed and were able to experience the piece for a much longer duration of uninterrupted time.
While the work was exhibited at the OSU Urban Arts Space I felt the individual listeners were relatively distracted and unwilling to spend a significant amount of time inside this piece. More than likely due to the influx of people circulating the gallery. The listener probably felt obligated to rotate through the piece more quickly as the line of listeners began to lengthen behind them. That is the type of outside pressure I had hoped to avoid. I really think the experience is about taking your time with the piece and not feeling rushed. I feel that the environment of the Clean Space Gallery is not as high profile as the Urban Arts Space downtown and may be less accessible to the general public, but is a far more beneficial space to exhibit this type of work in.
Atmospheric Pressure

I would visit markets frequently where ever I travelled in Asia. Although relatively illiterate, I found myself having the same unique experience. I did not know most of the languages in the countries I was visiting. The inability to find definitions for the thousands of overlapping words being spoken at the same time allowed me to hear everything being spoken as white noise. A unique soundtrack to my daily experience. Whether it was in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia or Japan it tended to be the same experience. There were many subtleties within these various equations, however.. I had a
strong ability to sense emotion from peoples’ tonal delivery of their language. I might not
know exactly what they were saying, but could definitely understand if they were angry,
annoyed or happy. Through the given visual context of the situation I could eventually
figure out what was going on within the scenario. I began to think about creating work
that involved converting words into only tonality and emotion.

I thought about a composition where I would get a few people to recite normal
everyday prose in a foreign language. I wanted them to recite from a grocery list and read
from a children’s book. Yet they had to be upset and mad when doing so. To my ears, the
tonality used to read grocery lists tends to be boring and emotionless; that used to read
children’s books seems to be filled with positive outlook and happiness. The script
seemed easy enough, especially since the dialogue would not be defined and
untranslatable due to the way I would overlap the languages while mixing the
composition. I asked Emi Inoue, another MFA student in art and a native speaker of
Japanese, to read excerpts from a children’s book in Japanese and let me record her. The
catch was that she had to do it very upset and pissed off. It’s pretty hard to get worked up
over the content of a children’s book. I would say it was not an easy task. What I was
asking her to do was be an actress. I had no idea if she had an acting background or not.
She gave me three separate readings in the hallway outside her studio. The location I
thought would add a little echo and space to the recorded tracks and help take it out of
context even more. When I listened to them through my computer, they didn’t sound as
passionately pissed off as I had hoped. No matter how many filters or effects boxes I ran
her voice through, I couldn’t enhance her recorded voice to come across with more
emotion. I ran this problem by Professor Ainger, and he completely understood the
situation. He pulled his phone out of his pocket and dialed his wife. He asked her to pretend to be an upset Chinese woman for me on the phone. She thought it was a ridiculous demand from out of the blue. Yet she obliged and did a far more impressive job than I could of imagined. Professor Ainger said you need an actress, not an average Japanese or Chinese person. After living in Asia for four years, I feel comfortable saying without stereotyping that most people I met there were very shy. What I was asking them to do was break out from their daily norm. And I worried about fulfilling stereotypes if the person was pretending to be something they weren’t already. And how the actor’s or actress’s interpretation of that culture would be conveyed within the work I was trying to make. Professor Ainger interjected the idea of sampling from something that already existed. Maybe a foreign film with fight scenes or scrappy dialogue. In the end it wouldn’t really matter what the subject of conversation was if the tone and emotion was all I was going for. Then the topic of the Asian voice came up. Why did it need to be Asian? Using an Asian language in this work would be the closest replication to the experience I had felt while living abroad.

As it turns out language would be the hardest sound source for me to work with. It’s identifiably human. The sound’s image is almost impossible to separate from the source. I was more concerned with removing definition from the words in this instance. I wanted to overlap upset voices talking at the same time in a way that no words were identifiable and all ran together. I felt this was the only way to isolate the tonality I was looking for. After months of searching, I stumbled on some old video footage I had recorded of Chinese people upset about something in a market I was visiting. The people were not the subject of the video but they became the overpowering soundtrack. It was
exactly what I needed and had all along, but it was also an essential part of the equation of this work that it took months to find. It’s funny for me to think that the soundtrack of a Chinese tourist family’s tiff accidentally caught on video would add the emotion I needed to Emi’s children’s book reading. Next I needed to decide on a physical presence for the sounds it had taken me so long to find.

“Atmospheric Pressure” is an entirely blown glass sculpture standing 4’6” tall. It is the largest piece of blown glass I have ever made for my own work. Almost every piece in this assemblage would be considered a “one shot” deal. My team consisted of Shahid Khan, Nick Ullum and myself. The glass components that they helped me make for this piece went beyond what the university hot glass studio could facilitate. It was definitely above the skill level of my assistants at that time of undertaking this project. I would guess that it took me about a year and a half to teach them the hand skills to assist me in making work of this scale in that studio.

By saying that the studio couldn’t facilitate the size of the work, I mean that equipment in each studio or glass shop has specific dimensions, and the size of the glass we were making exceeded the dimensions of the equipment available in the art department’s glass studio. The glass had to be set up in a specific way to maintain a specific shape while it was molten. When it came time for it to be inflated or opened in the final stages of the process, the glass object’s size crossed a point of no return in the process where it became so large there was no possibility for it to be reheated and shaped. At that time was immediately disconnected from its pipe and loaded into an annealing oven that could barely contain it.
My intent with “Atmospheric Pressure” was to entice the listener into eavesdropping on a situation. I wanted them to access this piece with a stethoscope, similar to how a doctor invades the private interior of our bodies. The doctor can hear what’s taking place inside, but you can not, and the entire time you are wondering what the doctor is hearing and if it is good or bad. Will I die? Will I live? It’s very invasive, to say the least, and you somehow feel excluded from this event even thought it’s taking place inside you and even though you are the subject of conversation. You are present but not a part of the dialogue that’s taking place between the doctor and the interior of your
body. This metaphor was important to me because in both cases you rely on your hearing more than your sight. The human body not transparent but we know there is a series of operating systems inside. However with “Atmospheric Pressure” it is made of clear transparent glass and appears to have nothing inside. Yet in both instance there is something to listen too.

So the stethoscope was an important way for me to allow one person at a time to penetrate the exterior of this transparent glass sculpture and listen to what was taking place inside. Again I was trying to create an intimate experience for one person at a time, and by using the stethoscope I was rationing the listening apparatus. The interior of the sculpture is empty. The glass is transparent, showing you nothing exists inside. You can not see the sound. Visually this work seems relatively unassuming. However when you place the stethoscope to the exterior of the glass form you hear an intensity associated with arguing. The listener has no idea what the conversation is about. The voices are recognizably human, but the language and meaning are undecipherable. I thought that most people might feel guilty about the curiosity that would make them want to eavesdrop on this intense conversation that you are obviously not a part of. After realizing that there is no identifiable person associated with the sound, While this work was exhibited in the clean space listeners told me they felt that they had a tendency to listen for longer periods of time because they were not worried about the repercussions of being caught in the act of eavesdropping. The design of the glass needed to be tall. I wanted it to be relatively close in size to the listeners. I wanted it to have a futuristic look and decided it should have a sphere on top to act as a protective window and sound insulator from the outside world. The spherical shape evenly distributes the force of each
listener’s hand pressure as they applied the stethoscope to the dome. The form also had to have enough weight to withstand being accidentally knocked over while listeners interacted with it. The design of the mid section and foot of the vessel were made to mimic an excerpt of a sound wave. The lower section was then sandblasted to help the viewer focus on this intended silhouette more easily.

Although some listeners felt they could hear the composition more clearly if they placed the stethoscope on the first flat disk protruding from directly under the dome. Which bringing me back to my own metaphor in my head about the doctor investigating the body. I witnessed many people investigating different locations on the exterior of “Atmospheric Pressure” to find the best sound clarity. However most admitted to searching for clarity within what was being spoken in the composition. Attempting to connect an identify with the spoken words instead of appreciating the acousmatic qualities of the piece itself.
“The Stairway” is a composition written for a surround sound setting. It is mixed into a 5.1 speaker configuration. It can be played in stereo but loses a lot of its effect when listened to that way. Inspired by the creaks in floors and draftiness of windows in older houses, this work was recorded in my kitchen and the stairwell of my apartment building. It seeks to convey the types of sounds that cause people to think they are hearing things that aren’t really there when it is really nothing more than the house itself.

I mixed this piece together in a circular way, so that it is all encompassing and
moves in a 360-degree path around the room. A few tracks are mixed through a reverb filter that makes the air in the recording sound more ghostly. This work has more narrative than is typically found in music concrète, and I think of it as being almost cinematic, but I approached its making in the same manner as my previous compositions. It wasn’t important for me to remove the identity of the sound object in this piece, however, because it contributed to the narrative, which I thought might be similar to the spooky sound effects you’d experience on an old radio broadcast, except in surround sound. I think the success of this piece depends on the listeners’ ability to recognize the sound sources because they help in giving it that creepy feeling. The main focus is on the footsteps walking on the creaking floor. The footsteps and the creaking were recorded separately and mixed together to match each other’s timing. I also recorded water splashing in a saucepan in the sink of the kitchen. The water was mixed in to sound as if it was in the walls of the stairwell the person is walking through. It is mixed so that when the person is walking from the left side of the sound field the splashing water is heard on the right. This changes as the person walks through the space. Taking the sounds out of context and placing them together immediately perplexes the listener as to what they are hearing. With their perception heightened through the uncertainty of sounds that don’t normally go together, they feel obliged to question what is transpiring.
I recorded the footage for a film short I made titled “Tarmac 34R-16L” with the HD camera in my phone. I was on a plane bound to Columbus from Seattle. As at the beginning of every flight, the stewardesses asked for everyone to turn off their personal electronic devices. I decided, however, this would be a perfect opportunity to get runway footage for an idea I’d had been wanting to make. I turned the phone camera on and held it flat against the window. As the plane left the gate and taxied down the runway into flight. I recorded everything along the way. Not once did any stewardess tell me to turn it
off or even notice what I was doing. The footage was all shot in one take as I pressed my hand firmly against the glass to obtain the most precise shot I could get. The recording process was inspired by the beginning of Orson Welles’s movie *Touch of Evil*, which starts with the longest continuous uncut shot in the history of film. Being an amateur filmmaker, I thought what a handicap to start out with. I got the footage loaded into my computer shortly after arrive home. The visual was good and the sound was ridiculous. Everyone was talking about Ohio State football, mixed with the sound of newspapers rustling, kids talking about Pokemon, and a grandmother describing her love of Pike Place Market. I had already been playing with removing the identity from sound and relying on peoples’ imaginations to feed them false information about what they thought they had heard. I decided this was the time to falsify a soundtrack to what they thought they were seeing.

I loaded the footage into Final Cut Pro software, ditched the soundtrack, and began playing with the orientation of the film. I laid out four video tracks that were cropped and stacked on top of one another and loaded the continuous shot into all four. Then I offset the starting points so they would begin from different points in the film. Next ? I set out to compose the shots. I would be giving the viewer a tiered pattern of visual information that ran from right to left mainly because I had recorded from a window on the left hand side of the plane.

I wanted the viewer to start of thinking they understood what they were seeing. I mixed the sounds of a mechanics studio with the engine of an old crop-dusting biplane into the first segment of the film. Most of the footage I had leaving the gate had airport
employees and random trucks driving around on the tarmac. I felt that that footage was unusable for the film I wanted to make. So the film begins in darkness and slowly fades into a shot of the plane well on its way down the runway. The dark opener is intended to trick the listener into believing the plane had started up in a hanger and has made its way out onto the runway to begin its journey. As the footage moves further along, the biplane engine begins to hiss, with its sound suggesting that of a modern jet engine. Eventually a rotary phone rings onboard. There is no way a rotary phone would be able to ring on board a plane unless it had a very long telephone cord following behind the plane. The phone call is answered. It is the control tower babbling muffled directions to the pilot. I wanted the listener to feel like they had started out in the passenger seat of the biplane and be moved into the cockpit of a jetliner. Their visual reference never changed yet through the change in audio they would suddenly be transported into a different location of the plane. As the plane rounds the corner on the runway, it comes to a pause, next in line and waiting to take off.

The plane begins to make noises as if it is transforming into something other than a plane. Mixed into the footage is a parking brake and the roar of a V8 engine. As the brake clicks into the on position, some of the footage stops moving. As the V8 starts up and begins to roar, some of the tracks begin to take off down the runway. The V8 audio track is looped into the other video tracks, and as the engine roars the video tracks begin to move in unison with the other tracks, eventually speeding to a point where the visual
information is relatively unreadable and the engine sounds have overlapped one another into a chaotic finish as the screen fades to black. Like a four-way drag race.

This piece gave me an opportunity to learn about syncing sound footage with film, but the matches in the work are not exact and were never intended to be. Although I did learn how to sync film exactly to sound markers, that exercise was not an important part of this composition. I wanted to falsify a complete soundtrack of visual footage, giving the viewer a brief moment to believe what they were seeing was real and then altering that perception completely by film’s finish.
While at the Ohio State University I spent a ridiculous amount of time on the phone with the financial aid office. In the fall quarter of 2009 alone, I calculated it to be
about four hours a week. A quarter at Ohio State is ten weeks long. Therefore forty hours of my student time was spent following up with a department that had misplaced important documents, that had been filed several times, and needed to be filed by specific deadlines in order for me to receive financial aid for graduate school. I basically spent a “work week” on the phone attempting to figure out what was going on.

By January of 2010 the paperwork had been found and filed. After some time, I received financial aid without any more problems. Until my last quarter. Somehow at the beginning of summer quarter the computer system said I was over awarded money from 1997, when I was attending my undergraduate program at Rochester Institute of Technology. The official at Ohio State said I needed to contact R.I.T. and figure out what the problem was. To make a long story short the two universities did a lot of finger pointing at each other. Yet they were unwilling to actually pick up a phone and communicate with one another. This led to me becoming the liaison to two institutions who were not interested in actually working together. I would often ask, “Could you please just call the other school and talk to one another directly?” The typical response from both parties was always something like, “I’m not gonna call there and sit on hold for 20 minutes to straighten this out, you can do that,” which I thought was completely insane because whomever I was speaking with was still being paid an hourly rate to work, no matter what they were doing. I felt that what I was asking fell under the aid officers’ job descriptions, yet everyone I dealt with was unwilling to actually do that job. This was a drastic change from what I had experienced living in Japan, where the
customer service is most likely the best in the world. I can honestly say I have never been treated better than when I was a basically illiterate foreigner living in Japanese society. I have never experienced anything close to that treatment since my return to the States. What has happened to America?

After sitting on hold for 10 minutes one afternoon, I was fed up. I decided to drive over to the financial aid office with my phone “still holding” in my shirt pocket. As I drove from Grandview Heights towards Campus I could still hear the automated recording broadcasting loud and clear. After a 15 minute drive, I parked and went inside. I found no one waiting in line and four employees chatting about movies behind the counter. I politely showed them my phone and asked them why I was still on hold if they had ample time to be socializing. They looked at me as if I were asking them trivia questions in pig latin. They handed me a card with a hand written number on the back and told me someone would be with me shortly. Needless to say I was floored and saddened to find that my intuition was correct.

To make a long story short, I had spent yet another forty hours acting as the go between for these two offices. The deadline to file financial aid for the summer quarter has past. The OSU office had informed me of this the day before the deadline. The money I was supposed to receive and had budgeted for this summer is no longer available. A summer’s worth of phone calls, paper chasing, and attempting to decipher individual institutions’ policies is ending in frustration. My time and energy are precious to me. I would have much rather used my time reading, doing research, having class discussions, or time to make artwork in my studio this summer. Instead I found myself sitting on the
phone, often on hold, doing someone else’s job. I couldn’t imagine a better way to spend eighty hours of my life than listening to the recordings played by the financial aid office automated phone system.

These recordings and my time spent frustrated and waiting are the inspiration for my final piece at Ohio State. During my time waiting, I decided to record the “on hold” portion of the automated recordings. As this phone script was pounded into my brain, I began to actually pay attention to what it was saying. There is a lot of repetition of particular words in these recordings, and those repeated words were being used in an attempt to maintain control of the phone call various ways. A few key phrases guide my interpretation of these “on hold” recordings. At the beginning of your “wait time” they imply that your call is an important call to them. As the “wait time” continues, however, the messages tend to become more authoritative. “Your phone call will be recorded, monitored and stored,” says one, in an almost paternalistic way, attempting to lead the phone in the direction they want it to go. You should be polite: you’re being recorded, implying you will be held accountable for anything you say, and that the accountability is one-way, yours but not the office’s. One of my favorite phrases in the “wait time” recordings is “Please hold the line,” because they are not going to call you back. The listener feels obligated to stay “on hold” for as long as it takes to get through to a human on the other end of the phone. They often say “again that is” in case they are speaking too fast and you don’t have time to actually comprehend what the hell we’re talking about they’ll say it “again” and “again.”
Another time-wasting feature of these automated recordings is logging your information into the system by punching your social security number or account number into the system. Apparently it is not actually given to the person on the other end of the line, because you have to repeat it all once you’ve gotten through to a real human anyway. It’s just a way of making the system that much harder to navigate. If you don’t “press” the information correctly and happen to be human and make a mistake by pressing a wrong button, chances are you will have to start over again. Other typically annoying phrases are “Press one now,” “we’re sorry that number is not recognized, and “please try again later, goodbye.”

The composition I made for “Ovation” was initially spawned my own frustration, but almost everyone can connect with the work through their own phone-related
experiences of being placed on hold and accidentally disconnected or struggling to navigate an automated directory while calling a business.

“Ovation” is composed of blown glass elements that house a miniature hard drive and two speakers. The clean design of the glass and the interior wiring of the speakers offers an intentional contrast to the annoying composition playing from them. The glass is made so that it contains the sound file within an environment. The work is to be listened to by placing one’s ear close to the glass bell jar or simply removing the bell jar all together, depending on the listener’s environment at the time of interaction. The speakers are not loud and need a quiet listening environment in order to be heard. The speakers loop extracted words and phrases that I have remixed from the actual financial aid automated recording arranged into an even more annoying composition. Highlighting the more important aspects of my moments “on hold,” creates an opportunity for the listener to hear what is actually being said. This, of course, is my interpretation of the sound in between the foreground and background, what I’m hearing in between the lines.
Conclusion

My experience of being relatively illiterate while living in Japan granted me the opportunity to find inspiration from the acousmatic sounds existing there and taught me a new way of listening. It was a major reason for my undertaking of graduate school and helped me muster the courage to learn how to work with a new medium and eventually incorporate that into a new body of work. The duration of my time at OSU was spent learning how to create with recorded sound as medium which I knew absolutely nothing about. I’ve worked with molten glass for 18 years and am very familiar with that material. The chance to take the inspirations that I have compiled from living abroad and apply them to a completely new medium was a rare opportunity most people wouldn’t get to take advantage of. This occasion has furthered my interests in various translations, and the misinterpretations, of words and images, their meanings, and how they’re used to communicate in our daily lives. I will continue to use these observations as fuel to make evolved variations of this type of work in the near future. Musique Concrete and molten glass are two mediums I really enjoy. I feel blessed to have been able to explore the possibilities of combining the two art forms together during my time at OSU. I don’t believe I would have ever taken on these projects and created a body work of this nature if I wasn’t given the opportunity to attend this university. I felt fortunate to have the chance to create works that could be interacted with by an art community in specific settings such as the “Sherman Studio Clean Space” and the newly renovated “Urban Arts
Space.” I feel very fortunate to have had such a rare opportunity to have so much support and receive encouragement from my peers and thesis committee of this university to experiment and try something completely new. At this point I believe it is difficult to foresee which direction my work will take. I believe there are endless possibilities and avenues to explore and have never been fond of clinging to a signature style. I have always felt my work should evolve as I grow with every new experience life has to send my way. Maintaining a freshness that keeps me engaged in the process of making is probably the most important part of creating for me. I believe that as long as I am continuously challenging myself to learn, taking risks and trying something new, my life and artwork will have the most rewarding outcome it could possibly have.
References


