cubefest
biennial 2024

Listening Lounge
Fri., Aug. 23-Sun., Aug. 25, 3 PM

Christopher Poovey
Inside a Mirage of Vertu

Meticulously handcrafted ornamental items made with exquisite craftsmanship are considered objects of vertu. While creating *Inside a Mirage of Vertu,* I have been weighing consequences of generative art forms, with more focus on those that rely on artificial intelligence, and I have been trying to come to terms with how this kind of art will transform artists' craft. *Inside a Mirage of Vertu* does not use an AI in its production, but does use automated processes for spatialization, such as ambisonic granulation, which generate 3D gestures and soundscapes. These soundscapes represent the surreal image of a musical singing bird box, a rather iconic object of vertu, but the piece places you inside a mirage — an apparition manufactured to exist in the world as if it were real.

Christopher Poovey is a composer, media artist, and creative coder who creates music and software that produce rich and colorful sound and encourage interactive structures. Poovey's compositions have been performed by Ensemble Dal Niente, Ensemble Mise-en, University of North Texas's Nova Ensemble, Indiana University's New Music Ensemble, and Indiana University's Brass Choir. He was a finalist for the 2021 International Confederation of Electroacoustic Grand Prix and has received a special mention from the 2021 Ars Electronica Forum Wallis. His work has also been selected for performance at conferences such as the International Computer Music Conference, Seoul International Computer Music Festival, International Confederation of Electroacoustic Music General Assembly, New York Electronic Music Festival, Society for Electroacoustic Music in the United States National Conference, Inner SoundScapes, National Student Electronic Music Event, Electronic Music Midwest, and MoxSonic. Poovey currently teaches at Oberlin Conservatory in TIMARA. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in composition from the University of North Texas and a B.M. in composition from Indiana University. To supplement his formal studies, he has taken courses at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique, at Princeton University for the Só Percussion Summer Institute, and has attended a residency at the Atlantic Center for the Arts. In addition to his work in composition, Poovey develops software for electronics music production and performance primarily in Max and CSound, including the Grainflow package for Max, a plethora of Max for Live devices, and VST instrument build using the Cabbage framework. These tools and his compositions may be found at christopherpoovey.com.

Zouning Liao

I have always had a desire to create a composition dedicated to nature. To fulfill this aspiration, I embarked on recording adventures near lakes to capture the sounds of late summer, primarily focusing on the chirping of crickets and the songs of birds indigenous to Bloomington, Indiana. I was astounded by the richness of the cricket orchestra in the forest and how it transformed throughout the day. In the opening of the piece, you will hear eight different recordings of crickets simultaneously. This auditory experience will take you on a journey, exploring the spectrum between real and synthetic sounds. I encouage you to immerse yourself in the environment and visualize the immersive surroundings as you traverse through different sections of the composition.

Born in Guangdong, China, **Zouning Liao's** music draws inspiration from her fascination with nature and technology, blended with a constant curiosity about the playing capacity of instruments. She endeavors to incorporate unexpected and everyday sounds into her music. Her music has been performed in the United States, France, China, and England. In 2023 her work was featured in the Musicacoustica Hangzhou Electronic Music Festival, Electronic Music Midwest, CampGround23, Turn Up 2023, SPLICE Festival, and Everyday is Spatial 2023. She was honored to also be featured in New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival (2022), SEAMUS national conference in (2021 and 2022), National Student Electronic Music Event (2021), and the Society of Composers Inc. (2021). Zouning was named a finalist in the ASCAP/ SEAMUS Student Composer Commission Competition in 2021. She is currently pursuing a master's degree with double majors in electronic music composition and music theory at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. She also serves as an associate instructor of music theory and teaches written and aural theory at undergraduate level. She holds a bachelor's degree from the same institution, where she studies with David Dzubay, John Gibson, and Chi Wang, among other notable mentors. In summer 2023 Zouning earned a certification from the CIEE Paris Contemporary Music Creation and Critique Program, ManiFeste & l'Académie at IRCAM-Centre Pompidou in Paris, France.

Steve Ashby
A not so distant past

A not so distant past reinterprets color scale data of video sources as control sources for sound creation via note selection, amplitude modulation, and other parameters. The work captures the sonic unfolding of time represented in the visual, while simultaneously giving voice to the visual stimulus. Through its generative nature, *A not so distant past* provides different realizations depending of the chosen video sources and the respective mapping of parameters to sound modules.

> a not so distant past
> collected frame by frame
> brushing off the dust
> prior to memory's revision
> a transfer from past to present
> with all its kinks and curves

Steve Ashby is a musician, composer, and sound artist based in the United States. Ashby's work focuses on sound found in the natural and digital worlds to discover places of intersection, which engage in the art of listening. Recent performances and residencies include the Australasian Computer Music Conference, ICMC, Soundpedro, Moxsonic, EMS Stockholm Guest Composer Series, Radiophrenia Scotland, Cube Fest at Virginia Tech, New Music Gathering, Sound Arts Richmond, and the NYC Electroacoustic Music Festival.

Bill Crouse
Echoes of the Ancestors
Fri., Aug. 23, 5 and 7 PM

Bill Crouse is a self-taught painter and sculptor who specializes in Native art forms. Crouse's performance, *Echoes of the Ancestors,* combines audio and live traditional dancing by Allegany River Seneca dancers, sharing oral traditions of the Seneca people through movement, sound, music, and light. The piece will move from creation through seasons and a traditional women's dance.

About the Alleghany River Seneca Dancers

A Native American dance group that showcases the traditional songs and dances of the Iroquois, the Allegany River Seneca Dancers' performances incorporate many aspects of Native American culture and share the original Seneca language and culture of the songs and dances. All performers wear traditional Native American regalia, and all the music is performed live; a highlight includes the Iroquois Smoke dance, a very fast contest dance. The Allegany River Seneca Dancers have been thrilling audiences at colleges, museums, powwows, and festivals since the mid-1980s, offering an authentic, hands-on experience with Native American music and dance.

Sounds in Motion
Fri., Aug. 23, 9 PM

DA Mekonnen
BLACK: Constellation X

DA Mekonnen's new experimental jazz project, dragonchild, brings the performance of *BLACK: Constellation X* in this immersive, multimedia spatial sound performance. Conceived and transmitted by DA Mekonnen (founder of Debo Band), dragonchild draws on decades of musical experimentation, embodied spiritual practice, and critical thinking — culminating in its debut work, *BLACK*. In this innovative listening experience, four one-sided LPs will be played simultaneously to create an immersive swarm.

Growing up in Texas as a first-generation Ethiopian-American, Sudanese-born **DA Mekonnen** often heard traditional Ethiopian instrumental and vocal recordings around his home and in his community. After becoming an accomplished saxophonist, Mekonnen sought out master Ethiopian musicians to learn to play the traditional instruments of his heritage. Mekonnen was the cofounder and long-time director of Debo Band, whose self-titled debut was included on NPR's 50 Favorite Albums of 2012. Mekonnen spent nine years with Silkroad Ensemble, under the direction of both Yo-Yo Ma and Rhiannon Giddens, 2015-2024, including a commission called *Emergence* in 2020.

Shawn Greenlee
Sluicer

Sluicer is a performance system for electroacoustic improvisation on high-density loudspeaker arrays with high-order ambisonics. In this work, two 20-voice, erratic synthesizers operate as a roving "chorus" under the player's direction. Both synths have a series of multichannel effects designed to work specifically with ambisonic signals, allowing the player to create and alter spatial dimensions. As audio flows, the guiding action is like closing/opening gates in a lock on a waterway. The results are timbral and spatial churns, swells, floods and drains, motion in repetition, expansion, and contraction. Sluicer is programmed in Max with tactile interfaces being high resolution, multi-touch control surfaces and a DJ-style MIDI controller.

Shawn Greenlee is a composer, sound artist, and professor at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where he leads the Studio for Research in Sound & Technology (SRST). Greenlee's recent work explores spatial audio, high density loudspeaker arrays, and erratic sound synthesis techniques. He has been active as a solo electronic and electroacoustic improvisor since 1997 and has toured extensively across the U.S. and Europe. Conference and festival performances include New Interfaces for Musical Expression (2018 Blacksburg, 2015 Baton Rouge, 2014 London, and 2013 Daejeon), International Computer Music Conference (2021 Santiago, 2018 Daegu, 2011 Huddersfield, and 2005 Barcelona), BEAST FEaST (2017 Birmingham), PdCon16 (2016 New York), Cube Fest (2019 and 2016 Blacksburg), Re-new (2013 Copenhagen), IN TRANSIT (2008 Berlin), and Elevate (2007 Graz), among others. Greenlee holds a Ph.D. in computer music and new media from Brown University.

Aline R S S de Souza

Aline de Souza, *performer; text, narration, movement choreography, and images*
Brandon Hale, *sound technician; composition, music technology, and sound spatialization*

This piece refers to my background living in Brazil and my specific story of migration away from a family where my dogs and I experienced a variety of forms of violence. I situate the violent approach to nature, animals, and people's bodies as a colonial way of thinking. I needed treatment for a treatable malformation from birth that compromised my breathing. My mother believed that people of "mixed races" would always have problems and were untreatable. I did not subscribe to a sense of shame for Indigenous origins and being "very mixed." Getting treatment as an adult is more complex than as a child, but I breathe well now. Away from that environment, I'm healing my body and processing immeasurable losses.

I'm an artist-scholar combining arts and social sciences, leveraged by technology. I'm currently in the interdisciplinary ASPECT Ph.D. program at Virginia Tech, focusing on arts, aesthetics, and politics. I am also a humanities and arts instructor in the Department of Religion and Culture. Through the practice of watercolor and harp, the creation of multimedia art, and studies of critical theory, I seek to understand how the arts can cause social change. In my research, I study the potential of arts and aesthetics for interrupting xenophobic and racist narratives around immigration.

Amelia Winger-Bearskin
LIQUID / REAL

Featuring live accompaniment by Eamon O'Connor, electric guitar

Sat., Aug. 24, 7 PM

Amelia Winger-Bearskin uses new kinds of technology to tell new kinds of stories, particularly scientific stories around the environmental future. With a primary ecological research area of water, Winger-Bearskin stands with those who defy categorization.

LIQUID / REAL merges the ethereal realms of sound and the essential element of water to create a meditative, immersive art experience. Together with video projections summoning images of water, the piece intricately weaves live vocals, guitar harmonies, and transformative effects to transport audiences into vivid aquatic landscapes and speculative sonic worlds. Conceived and performed by Winger-Bearskin, *LIQUID / REAL* invites listeners to dive into an auditory exploration of water's vital role on our blue planet.

The artwork delves into water scarcity, contamination, and humans' sacred connection with water through this sound journey. It reflects on the physical essence of water and its symbolic significance in fostering life and connectivity among diverse communities worldwide, especially highlighting the struggles of Indigenous populations facing water injustices.

LIQUID / REAL aims to use the power of immersive technology and artistic expression to stir empathy, provoke thought, and inspire conversation about the interdependence of Earth's water systems. It challenges us to reflect on our personal water narratives and encourages collective action toward protecting this invaluable resource. This experience at Cube Fest is an invitation to perceive, feel, and ultimately understand water as a resource and shared story that resonates deeply across all walks of life.

Amelia Winger-Bearskin is a Banks Family Preeminence Endowed Chair and associate professor of artificial intelligence and the arts at the Digital Worlds Institute at the University of Florida. Winger-Bearskin is also the founder of the AI Climate Justice Lab, the Talk to Me About Water Collective, and the Stupid Hackathon. In 2022 she was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Award as part of the Sundance AOP Fellowship cohort for her project, *CLOUD WORLD / SKYWORLD,* which was part of the Whitney's *Sunrise/Sunset* series.

She was a fellow at Stanford University in 2021 as their artist and technologist-in-residence, made possible by the Stanford Visiting Artist Fund in Honor of Roberta Bowman Denning (VAF). In 2020, while a Mozilla Fellow at the MIT Co-Creation Studio she founded *Wampum Codes,* an award-winning podcast and an ethical framework for software development based on Indigenous values of co-creation. She was a delegate at the Summit on Fostering Universal Ethics and Compassion for His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, at his World Headquarters in Dharmsala, India in 2019, and in 2018 she was awarded the 100k Alternative Realities Prize for her virtual reality project, *Your Hands Are Feet,* from Engadget and Verizon Media. This was also the year that nonprofit IDEA New Rochelle won the $1 million Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge for its VR/AR Citizen toolkit to help the community co-design their city.

Winger-Bearskin's video art was selected as a part of *Storytelling:* La biennale d'art contemporain autochtone, 2e édition (Art Biennale of Contemporary Native Art) at Art Mur (Montreal, Canada). She has been a featured artist at numerous international performance art festivals since 2008 in cities not limited to Beijing, Manila, Seoul, Sao Paulo, New York, and Washington, D.C. She presented her performance art at the 2012 Gwangju Art Biennial and created an interactive portion of the Exchange Archive at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2013. Her work is part of the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the McCord Museum.

Winger-Bearskin is an enrolled member of the federally recognized Seneca-Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma.

Sounds in Space
Sat., Aug. 24, 9 PM

Angela McArthur
Pankopat

Pankopat is a sound work centered on a community of elderly Nepalese women in Woolwich, southeast London. These women have migrated to the U.K. with a sense of connection born out of a shared military history between the Gurkhas and British army. However, their journey is challenging, their status insecure, and their material conditions at times poor. They are vulnerable to London's systems and people, yet maintain a joyful resilience and warmth. This work frames the researchers within the process of recording and listening, in order to foreground the construction of the work as an intersubjective, participatory, and to be a non-extractive process. These methods continue to shape the trajectory of this ongoing project.

Angela McArthur is an artist and academic, leading an interdisciplinary (art/science) M.A. in spatial sound in the Department of Anthropology at University College London. McArthur is part of the collectives Ocean Memory Project and Organismo (TBA21), and her work centers on the practice and theorization of aesthetics in spatial sound and ocean environments. She works with the IKO loudspeaker and other spatial systems, and her research interests include spatial aesthetics, underrepresented and non-human (particularly marine) onto-epistemologies. McArthur champions diversity in access and representation for spatial technologies and media.

Weilu Ge
Tell

Tell is a spatial soundscape composition that explores stories and music expressions of the Qiang people, an Indigenous group living in the mountains in Central China since ancient times. The original field recording was collected during a field trip to a historical Qiang village in Sichuan, China. The motivation behind the trip was to help document the cultural heritage of Qiang, since many of their libraries and archives were destroyed during the big earthquake in Sichuan in 2008, following the continuous decline in passing down various cultural traditions and artistic practices. As many Qiang traditions are continuously marginalized today, the younger generation has adapted to speaking different languages and is alienated from its culture. Composed of field recording, noise, and electronic improvisation, *Tell* aims to create a shared listening space to interrogate critical issues related to culture displacement, disembodiment, and the disconnected communication between generations in Indigenous culture.

The soundscape unfolds in an intimate listening space where a senior Qiang man sits in a dark corner singing a ballad to a past lover from his young age while trying to recall the most precious memories. This singing voice is developed and transformed throughout the piece to construct a first-person listening perspective. In Qiang culture, people are often forced to separate from their true love to follow a marriage arrangement from their family, and usually marry people who live on a different mountain they have never seen. This kind of traumatic experience and sense of loss can be perceived in many aspects of Indigenous life in Qiang culture today, especially after the earthquake when not only people but also many familiar home places shattered into pieces of debris. Through the lens of a first-person perspective, *Tell* then zooms out from the singing voice and takes the audience on an immersive soundscape listening journey by reconstructing various moments from Indigenous Qiang activities, such as music-making, ritual performance, hunting, and playing.

Weilu Ge is a composer and media artist based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She works with various media forms, from concert music and installation to video and innovative technology. Since 2015 she has focused her research and career on experimental and intermedia theatre in the role of a composer-director, exploring the potential of sound and space as the medium that integrates other art forms and helps create a comprehensive artistic expression. Her recent practice explores theatrical expressions of sonic, visual, and spatial media in interactive and immersive spaces, taking composition and space as critical means to examine relationships between power, system, body, and technology in a social-cultural context. Her works have been performed and exhibited internationally. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in creative practice and critical inquiry at Harvard University. She holds an Interschool M.F.A. in art and technology, composition, and experimental sound practice with a concentration in integrated media from the California Institute of the Arts; an M.M. in computer music from Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University; and a B.A. from Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Matias Vilaplana Stark
Funeral for a Whale

Funeral for a Whale developed from my curiosity regarding the funeral practices of whales and other marine mammals, some of whom carry their deceased relative's body for days as a manifestation of their mourning. Sometimes, whales and dolphins will even keep vigils around their deceased family members or companions. I found this at once so strange and uncanny, and yet also so immediately relatable as a communal expression of grief and loss. This piece is an attempt to imagine that space of grief and reflect on their ceremonies of remembrance. I often feel reluctant to impose a narrative on my music for fear of it being too restrictive for listeners. My goal when creating music is always to encourage reflection and imagination, not to be too overly prescriptive regarding what the music is really about. My hope is that *Funeral for a Whale* can reconcile my anxieties by offering some context for the piece as I was creating it, while still inviting listeners to weave together a story of their own.

Matias Vilaplana Stark is a Chilean music technologist, composer, and improviser. Stark is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the composition and computer technologies program at the University of Virginia. His research interests lie at the intersection of immersive media and musical practice, working on designing interactive music environments with virtual reality systems and the creation of 3D virtual environments as graphic scores for musical improvisation. He holds a B.F.A. from the Music Technology program at Universidad de Chile, and an M.A. in media arts from the University of Michigan. In Santiago, he worked as a recording engineer and sound designer, collaborating with various artists in dance, theatre, and visual arts projects. At Michigan, he focused on creating music using movement-based interactive systems with motion capture technology. He also started the improvisation group Lines, where he performs live electronics with a rotating ensemble. In his music, field recordings, sound synthesis, and samples from musical instruments are combined through different processing and editing techniques to blur the lines between real-world and abstract sounds, producing fictional soundscapes that cross over into the magical realm.

Eric Lyon
A Sudden Light

A Sudden Light was commissioned by Annie Stevens as part of her project, *The Memory Palace*, a concert of music and dance created for the Cube in 2024. My composition pursues the idea of music as a "memory palace," working with performed percussion sounds that reappear in transfigured forms. The piece was inspired by a passage from Walter Pater's *The Renaissance*:

> *A sudden light transfigures a trivial thing, a weathervane, a windmill, a winnowing flail, the dust in the barn door; a moment — and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect; but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that the accident may happen again.*

A Sudden Light was created in collaboration with Stevens, testing and recording many percussion instruments until we found an ensemble that resonated for both of us. The piece starts as a virtuosic solo that gradually becomes spatially inscribed into the architecture of the Cube, creating a memory palace for Stevens' performance as it unfolds into space.

Eric Lyon is a composer and audio researcher whose software includes FFTease and LyonPotpourri. Lyon is the author of *Designing Audio Objects for Max/MSP* and *Pd* and *Automated Sound Design,* a book that presents technical processes for implementing oracular synthesis and sound processing across a wide range of audio applications. His work has been recognized with a ZKM Giga-Hertz prize, MUSLAB award, the League ISCM World Music Days competition, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Lyon is professor of practice in the School of Performing Arts at Virginia Tech and is a faculty fellow at the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology.

home: gokǫ̀
Casey Koyczan and Andy Rudolph
Sun., Aug. 25, 7 PM

home: gokǫ̀ s an immersive audio and video performance demonstrating the artist's culture and how he continues to push it forward using technology and experimentation, revealing a sense of life in Canada's Arctic.

Casey Koyczan is a Dene interdisciplinary artist who uses various mediums to communicate how culture and technology can grow together in order for us to develop a better understanding of who we are, where we come from, and what we will be. Koyczan creates with whatever tools are necessary to bring an idea to fruition, specializing in sculpture, installation, 3D/VR/AR/360, video, and audio works such as music, soundscapes, and film scores. Koyczan has participated in residencies, exhibits, festivals, and collaborations in parts of the world such as Finland, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, the Netherlands, the U.S., and the U.K. Koyczan is also a musician, producer, filmmaker, actor/narrator, and advocate for future generations of artists and musicians.

Andy Rudolph is a freelance sound designer whose work spans nearly all facets of audio creation: post-production, mixing composition, production, performance, installation, field recording, hardware/software development, and many points in between.

Indigenous Social: A Spatialized Mixtape
Sun., Aug. 25, 9 PM

The *Indigenous Social* is an hour of cuts by popular Indigenous recording artists, hand-picked by Alicia Aldaz, Melissa Faircloth, Victoria Ferguson, and Eddie Polanco, and spatialized to a fully surround experience by Eric Lyon. Sit, back, relax, and enjoy this unique set of tracks!Andy Rudolph is a freelance sound designer whose work spans nearly all facets of audio creation: post-production, mixing composition, production, performance, installation, field recording, hardware/software development, and many points in between.

Cube Fest Biennial 2024 Planning Committee

Eric Lyon, professor of practice, School of Performing Arts

Tanner Upthegrove, media engineer, Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology

Margaret Lawrence, director of programming, Moss Arts Center

Tyechia Thompson, assistant professor, Department of English

Brendan David-John, assistant professor, Department of Computer Science

cube*fest*
2024

IMMERSIVE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES

August 23-25, 2024

Indigenous artists forge new creative paths with technology and tradition

SCHEDULE

Friday, August 23

Listening Lounge
Christopher Poovey,
Zouning Lao, and Steve Ashby

3 PM
Perform Studio
Free

Bill Crouse
Echoes of the Ancestors

5 and 7 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students

Sounds in Motion
DA Mekonnen,
Shawn Greenlee, and
Aline R S S de Souza

9 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students

Saturday, August 24

Listening Lounge
Christopher Poovey, Zouning
Lao, and Steve Ashby

3 PM
Perform Studio
Free

Amelia Winger-Bearskin
LIQUID / REAL

7 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students

Sounds in Space
Angela McArthur, Weilu Ge,
Matias Vilaplana Stark,
and Eric Lyon

9 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students

Sunday, August 25

Listening Lounge
Christopher Poovey, Zouning
Lao, and Steve Ashby

3 PM
Perform Studio
Free

home: gokǫ̀
Casey Koyczan
and Andy Rudolph

7 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students

Indigenous Social:
A Spatialized Mixtape

9 PM
Cube
$10, free for Virginia Tech students