

# **ARTIST STATEMENT | July 2024**

## COMPOSITING

My music ranges from solo works to staged multimedia spectacles; from intimate and contemplative acoustic chamber pieces to mixed, large ensemble forces featuring multichannel surround sound. In all cases, my music includes some effort to reconcile strange or unlikely sonic bedfellows through a careful act of compositing; that is, the merging of sonic constituents into aggregates — of parts into a perceived whole.

Drawing from natural phenomena, scientific and mathematical concepts, psychological and existential models, and deeply personal reflections and memories, my work challenges the typical and myopic discretizations of musical and sonic archetypes. The fluid composites I make can be purely acoustic, synthetic, or based on personal field recordings, but they are often translated into a primarily instrumental domain.

#### **EMERGENCE**

Categorically, there is much more at stake between mere order and disorder than we've come to represent. Perceptually and canonically, our music remains fixed — as either ordered or disordered at any moment — instead of exploring subtleties between extremes in a continuous flux. Interpolations from one state to another are still musically obvious and insufficient for illustrating the expressive power of sonic hybrids.

Musicians and listeners not only deserve but actively crave a dynamism that allows new relationships to emerge spontaneously from a variety of boundary conditions. This cannot be achieved by reducing our concept of musical noise to colorless and uniform distributions. Instead, I strive to give shape and non-uniformity to what others might label "chaos" by carefully contextualizing these passages.

The contemporary musical landscape is also fraught with gatekeeping practices that ensure favoritism and the preservation of an elite, drowning out emergent voices from nontraditional backgrounds, those taking nontraditional risks, and even musical research that was once institutionally supported. Today's situation serves no one — neither those at the margins who lack access to institutional support, nor those supported by institutions trying to follow their own path. The only ones who win are those with cash flow demanding to hear what they already know.



# **ARTIST STATEMENT | July 2024**

### **BOUNDARY CONDITIONS**

I confront these issues head-on in my work by pushing back against entrenched norms. Often they are addressed in the pre-compositional sketching of my music, which may initially begin with the construction of formal or generative constraint systems followed by a critical phase of solfèging and rigorous earwork — deliberately defying any "rules" I set up for myself in favor of free play, of something that could "emerge," abandoning a strictness of material in favor of something that flows naturally and spontaneously. In other words, I structure possibility around a carefully crafted set of boundary conditions.

Rather than maintaining hopeless devotion to what may be an initially flawed or incomplete idea, instead I set out with a healthy skepticism of my own intuitive faculties while constructing some initial starting point, but I grant myself the permission to be transformed by my materials as they evolve, encountering sometimes profound realizations as a larger construction begins to take shape. Getting "swept up" in this way is perhaps the most exhilarating part of my creative process.

Across my works, a highly personal definition of "emergence," well... emerges. My pieces and the repertoire I engage with are increasingly reliant on musical situations that are established to allow specific qualities to emerge from their surroundings. At its core this approach believes in one's potential, rather than obsessing about the constraints of the past.

## **AWARENESS**

Living and working abroad, far away from my country of origin and in environments that can push the limits of comfort and familiarity, has sharpened my awareness of cultural and institutional barriers and has provided ample creative inspiration. Flâneurism and foreignness are often themes in my work. Such experiences have deepened my understanding of privilege, class, race, exclusion, appropriation, and the importance of genuine engagement with diverse perspectives. It has taught me to appreciate the nuances of artistic practices that are at first opaque or quite distant from my own.

Close collaboration with performers and a fluid development of shared materials are central to my work, especially as this fuels exploration of micro-temporality and instrumental technique. Working in my studio is, of course, just one manifestation, but I combat this singular mindset by participating in research on orchestration, and instrumental and vocal timbre, where I often work with colleagues from other discourses, aimed at rejecting aesthetic stagnation and embracing a more inclusive and empathetic approach.



# **ARTIST STATEMENT | July 2024**

## **PROXIMITY**

Stanislavski, to whom generations of modern acting techniques are indebted, anticipated the move from stage to screen acting well before the 1920s talkies. Acting evolved from a classical, stylized, expressive style necessary to project from the proscenium to the back of the house into a style that has been called more intimate, honest, vivid, sub-textural, nuanced, realistic, true, natural, and most importantly, believable. The proximity of a recording apparatus to an actor made it possible to capture subtle, micro-expressive gestures, ensuring the psychological realism of a scene and immersing both the actor and observer in a character's surroundings.

Unlike film, art music has generally not evolved to embrace this technological shift. Representation is still the standard to which all instrumental technique aspires. Only some have researched the subtle terrain at intimately close ranges and quiet dynamic levels, in the close proximity of instruments to piezo crystals or mic capsules, revealing endless possibilities. Like dialogue for film, so much is communicated in the high frequencies of a quick breath, a slight pause, or a sigh, just above the noise floor or at the threshold of hearing. Was it a crescendo? Was it imagined or implied? Performances must evolve to incorporate these lessons. Projection is no longer the most expressive trade skill.

### **IMMERSION**

In my work, computational technologies are not used for their own sake but as a means of approaching immersive realness. I do not seek an overabundance of synthetic or amplified sound. Instead, technology functions as a tool in service of bringing listeners closer to the properties — what Stanislavski might call the "tasks," "actions," and "circumstances" — that is, of unmistakable and believable audio sources.

Some may argue that realistic synthesis, or a mimesis of real-world sounds by acoustic instruments, belongs to a specific genre or time period. However, this is part of a broader aesthetic shift, as from stage to screen, where the subtle, the intimate, and the immersive have become central to our perceptions. This is why Murail claimed, for example, that devoted rock listeners could identify timbre with far greater precision than most classically-trained musicians.

Modern acting techniques are in some way based on studying a character's "actions" and "circumstances" so closely that a performer is able to experience firsthand a character's inner reality, thereby producing "truthful" performances, according to Stanislavski. This is not unlike the Situationists, who maintained that complex behaviors emerge from situations rather than from personalities. In other words, by simulating a character's boundary conditions, as I strive for with sounds, a desirable realism is more likely to emerge in the performer and in the listening experience.