

Jason Thorpe Buchanan

Composer & Multimedia/Sound Artist

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Portfolio of select works

Artistic Director, the [Switch~ Ensemble]

Artistic Associate/Lecturer, Hybrid Music Lab
Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber Dresden

Ecology of Disruption (2024)

three performers, feedback instruments, sensors, generative electronics, and video
Commissioned by Tetractys New Music's 2024 "Here Be Monsters" Festival – 15 minutes
Premiered May 26, 2024, Austin, Texas
Video forthcoming: www.jasonthorpebuchanan.com Score: <https://bit.ly/3Xciodd>

Score: <https://bit.ly/3Xciodd>

Ecology of Disruption for Line Upon Line Percussion was composed in April of 2024 and premiered in late May. A trio for three performers with generative audio and gesturally reactive systems for DSP and live video processing, three custom-built feedback instruments made from metal brackets, springs, and guitar pickups drive a feedback system in software, each output to transducers via volume pedals which the performers operate and control. Hand-worn sensors trigger reservoirs of audio and video samples, in conjunction with the control of various parameters for audiovisual processing and projection. The work further utilizes footage from across the globe of events and political situations which have been recontextualized by technology, such as government-sanctioned killings in Iran, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, occupation and brutality against civilians in Gaza, continued violence and fascism in the post-Trump era, and unending patterns of negligence and greed by corporate and political leaders with regard to the global climate crisis.



Emergent Phenomena (2023)

alto saxophone, bass trombone, electric guitar, and generative electronics

Commissioned by IntAct Festival, 2023 – 31 minutes

Premiered December 24, 2023, Bangkok, Thailand

Video: <https://vimeo.com/911123291> Score: <https://bit.ly/3StaV5H>

Emergent Phenomena for the TACETi Ensemble was composed in November of 2023, following the development of a sophisticated system for real-time structural analysis of live microphone inputs. A trio for alto saxophone, trombone, and electric guitar, the electronics are entirely generative, using a self-training machine learning system. A clustering algorithm alongside an index of data from rapid analysis searches for temporal points of spectral self-similarity across all three microphone inputs. When patterns in harmonic spectra, amplitude, and other musical parameters are recognized, the system gradually learns from what it hears and classifies these sonorities to create a temporal map of musical ‘objects’ in the work. This perpetually growing store of data is used to respond to the musicians accordingly with generative material. Four layers of generative electronics take place: Each “novel” sound that the computer perceives is immediately recorded into a series of perpetually recording buffers, which are categorized and written to disk. When the computer perceives a match between past and present it retrieves the samples written at each point in the past to perform a variety of manipulations, based upon what is heard in the present moment.



Based on the amount of time that has elapsed since the matching sample was taken, how many times it has occurred, and the spectral and musical characteristics of each “object”, the computer will combine discrete pre-recorded samples to generate a composite sound in response. Each of the three microphone signals are processed according to perceived patterns and sonic data, such as amplitude, density of musical activity, or frequency spectra. Lastly, a variety of other processes are performed both on the input from the musicians, and from the sounds generated by the system itself. In each moment, this may result in new material similar to what is performed by the musicians, or new material in stark contrast to what it perceives, a dynamic, mercurial system which is learning and changing with each passing moment.

This work was conceptualized while recovering from an injury in the Summer of 2023 outside of Berlin. Inspired by the lasting neurological effects this injury had on my body, which was contorting itself to protect my spine from further injury, I was struck by the behavior of my own human body as a complex system that in fact, I had little control over. Correspondingly, I felt renewed interest in developing new systems of interactivity between human musicians and machines. My goal was to create a work that does not rely on temporal synchronicity between electronics and the musicians, such as a click track or precise soundfile triggering, nor sensors and gestural tracking, but rather a system which truly responds to the spontaneous and nuanced details of the musical material itself, and the ways in which these sounds unfold over time to create complex networks.

"The emergence of life and intelligence from less-alive and less-intelligent components has happened at least once. Emergent behavior is that which cannot be predicted through analysis at any level simpler than that of the system as a whole...Emergent behavior, by definition, is what's left after everything else has been explained." — George Dyson

Reflexive Iterations 1.a (2020)

alto sax, bass clarinet, percussion, violin, cello, and extended “no-input” mixer

Commissioned by TACETi Ensemble, 2020 Thailand New Music and Arts Symposium, Bangkok – Premiered December 20, 2020

Video: <https://vimeo.com/560740537>

Score: <https://bit.ly/3yt8NyL>



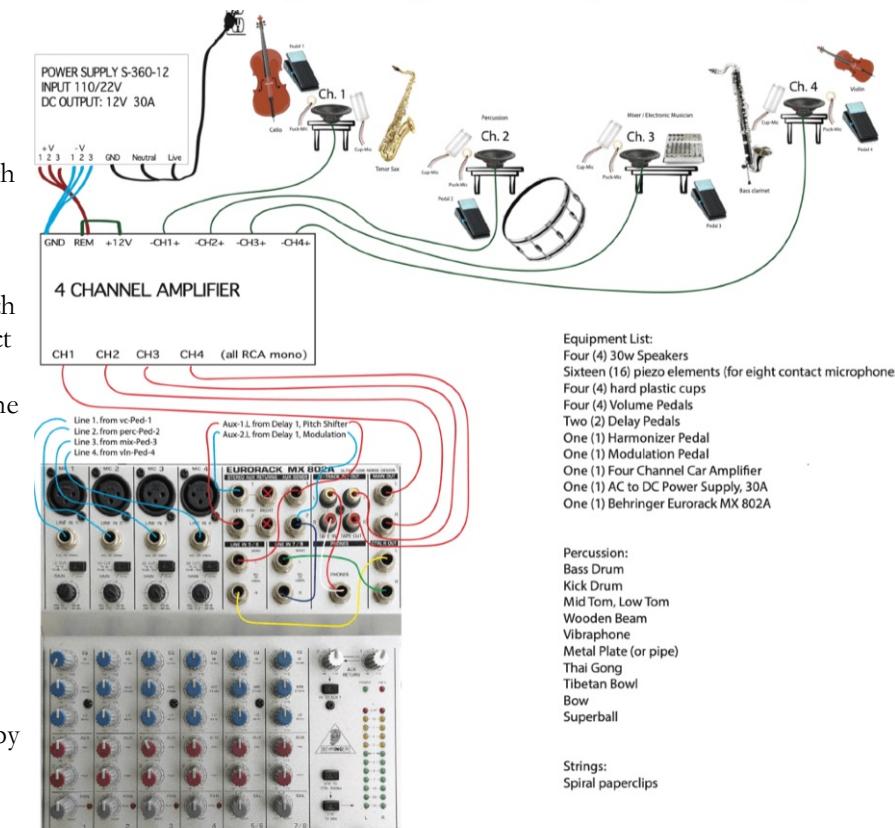
Reflexive Iterations 1.a was written for the TACETi Ensemble to be premiered during the 2020 Thailand New Music and Art Symposium. The work expands upon the “no-input” mixing tradition in noise music, routing input from various contact microphones through an analog system with which the performers control signal flow through both physical proximity and electrical attenuation. The mixer/composer manipulates these signals through gain staging, attenuation, and bandpass filters which change the power of different frequency components within the audio spectrum. These are then routed through auxiliary sends to two systems of effect pedals, back into the mixer and a 4-channel car amplifier, and finally out to four discrete speakers. Each speaker emits air pressure waves, which are both perceived by the audience and musicians, as well as fed back through the system again via the same contact microphones which first converted the sound into electrical signals. In other words, they “hear” themselves. The physical behavior of the musicians on stage influence the character and quality of this recursive process based on the position and proximity of the microphones to the speakers, “tuning” and also introducing new, physical noise by touching the microphone or plastic filter against the vibrating speaker cone itself.

In some way this work is in response to the events of 2020 and designed as an antidote to life on the internet. A desire to construct a system dealing with corporeal attributes of physical space—air, sound, bodies—in a way that would not be possible with a digital system. This participatory network requires the musicians to interact with and dynamically engage the signals themselves, exploring the transmission of invisible waves traveling through a real-world space with their own physical gestures. The precise result is unknown to the performers prior to performance—subject to a staggering number of variables—as they iteratively interpret suggested physical actions while reflexively responding in real-time to the ramifications of these actions in an attempt to control a thing that, by its very nature, is precarious and mercurial.

Transposed Full Score
v12.16.20 - sketch

Reflexive Iterations 1.a
for the TACETi Ensemble

Jason Thorpe Buchanan
December 16, 2020



Equipment List:
 Four (4) 30w Speakers
 Sixteen (16) piezo elements (for eight contact microphones)
 Four (4) hard plastic cups
 Four (4) Volume Pedals
 Two (2) Delay Pedals
 One (1) Harmonizer Pedal
 One (1) Modulation Pedal
 One (1) Four Channel Car Amplifier
 One (1) AC to DC Power Supply, 30A
 One (1) Behringer Eurorack MX 802A

Percussion:
 Bass Drum
 Kick Drum
 Mid Tom, Low Tom
 Wooden Beam
 Vibraphone
 Metal Plate (or pipe)
 Thai Gong
 Tibetan Bowl
 Bow
 Superball

Strings:
 Spiral paperclips

all-forgetting-is-retrieval (2019)

alto sax, bass clarinet, bass trombone, electric guitar, percussion, violin, cello, augmented conductor and electronics

Commissioned by TACETi Ensemble, 2019 Thailand New Music and Arts Symposium, Bangkok – Premiered July 7, 2019

Video: <https://vimeo.com/386270819>

Score: <https://bitly/2kcTfyZ>



all-forgetting-is-retrieval explores the formation of human memory, retrieval, and failure, drawing from two sources. “Myth of Permanent Memory” from Richard A. Chechile’s book *Analyzing Memory: The Formation, Retention, and Measurement of Memory*: “There is a common belief that forgetting is strictly due to a retrieval failure. It is curious why this idea of a permanent memory is so appealing...the storage of information is not perfect. Storage as well as retrieval is subject to failure. Thus, the hypothesis that **all-forgetting-is-retrieval** is incorrect. For information in this state of permanent [long-term] memory, all subsequent forgetting is assumed to be caused by a retrieval failure. Yet...there is no known biological mechanism to stop the adaptive changes in memory from continuing and thereby possibly destroying the prior learning record. If the learning environment changes, the same adaptive mechanisms that created the memory in the first place will continue to rearrange the structure of memory and potentially destroy the former memory representation.” Dialogue from the 1978 ephemeral film *Human Memory* is used as sonic material for the electronics, written for eight musicians including a conductor augmented by wearable electronics to trigger and govern the behavior of temporal events and media, manipulated through gestural tracking mapped onto discrete musical parameters. The title is both perplexing and quickly disproven in the above passage, reflecting the strange and unfamiliar space that, for me, the piece inhabits with “failures” both large and small. My apprehension toward falling into familiar patterns and relying on my past compositional work shares a similar cognitive and emotional space as “lost” experiences—the inability to be truly present in a moment, or failure to commit to memory experiences that are simultaneously both formative and fleeting. The rapid loss of their fidelity is staggering, and this work attempts to confront that impermanence and decay. To reflect this, I was interested in both paraphrasing and sampling elements of my past work, alongside the recontextualization of “found” media and sonic material deeply familiar to me. How can we be certain of things we have experienced, and what if the events that took place were, in fact, radically different than we remember? These inaccuracies and discrepancies that form over time through internal repetition, how information storage and retrieval may be influenced by context, and what kind of experience might interrupt a memory from being formed, are explored. “The subject of our film is memory. Imagine what your mental life would be like if you had no memory at all.”

Transposed Full Score
v.07.02.19 - first draft

for the TACETi Ensemble

Jason Thorpe Buchanan
July 2 2019



PANIC ARCHITECTURE (2017)

Sinfonietta (1.1.1.1-1.1.1.0-1.1.1.1 – 2 Perc, harp, piano) and electronics

Commissioned by the Earle Brown Music Foundation for the Time Spans Festival

Premiered by the Talea Ensemble with conductor Jeffrey Means

DiMenna Center, NYC - August 2, 2017

Video: <https://vimeo.com/245320082> Score: <https://bit.ly/2yzGr7q>

The score is a dense, multi-page document with detailed musical notation for each instrument. It includes various dynamics (e.g., ff, f, mp, pp), performance techniques (e.g., 'slap tongue'), and specific instrument instructions (e.g., 'B.FL', 'Ob.', 'B. Cl (in Bb)'). Time signatures are frequently changing, with examples like 3/4, 5/4, 10/5, and 4/2. The score also contains several sections labeled with letters (e.g., 'B.FL', 'Ob.', 'B. Cl (in Bb)', 'C.Bsn.', 'Hn.', 'C.Tpt.', 'Tbn.', 'Perc. I', 'Perc. II', 'Hpf.', 'Pno.', 'Vln. I (iv 12)', 'Vln. II (iv 12)', 'Vla. (iv 12)', 'D.B.'). The notation is highly detailed, with many small notes and specific performance instructions.



PSYCHASTHENIA B: PANIC ARCHITECTURE

Psychastenia is defined as “a group of neuroses characterized by phobias, obsessions, compulsions, or excessive anxiety”, imagining a new cycle of works for ensemble and various immersive media environments. During the performance of each work in the cycle, reservoirs of media files are created, retrieved, re-organized, and composited against one another, creating temporal, aural, or visual dissonances between past and present actions – events unfolding on stage and in media generated in real-time. The commingling of fluctuating chronologies creates temporal instability, challenges the mutability of memory, and proposes an alternative, speculative engagement with bodily-lived time. The psychasthenic possesses insufficient control over conscious thinking or memory, wandering aimlessly or forgetting the task at hand. Their thoughts are scattered, necessitating significant effort in order to organize them or communicate with others, frequently accompanied by characteristic insomnia that induces fatigue. *Panic Architecture* describes a participatory framework demanding compulsive interaction and attention. The relentless influx of email, messages, and notifications compel our constant engagement and response – we have assimilated dependency on these means of communication that now function as our tether to society and a primary mode of interpersonal contact. The act of checking one's email can throw consumers into a state of panic or suspension of breath, the term ‘email apnea’ coined to describe this unconscious reflex. Experiments in behaviorism and operant conditioning found that rats given rewards irregularly in response to minor daily tasks were compulsively driven to continue, in hopes of another reward. This behavior, termed ‘intermittent reinforcement’, is applicable to our modern social networks and digital platforms, entiticing users to obsessively check for new content. Facebook and Twitter are most the potent and ubiquitous examples of systems that instill panic and path dependence. Families and friends ‘panic’ another other, affected by posts and status updates. These communications, particularly when attached to audible or haptic stimuli, are mechanisms of panic architecture that are designed to induce continual, obsessive actions paid on the consumer to click and update their user interface. Digital panic occurs when multiple, simultaneous systems intermittently reinforce a user’s attention. Digital connectivity, flow, and multitasking online sometimes lead to psychological states that resemble those of a psychasthenic, described as ‘continuous partial attention’, ‘simultaneous time’, or ‘ambient intimacy’. To enable cohesive, linear thoughts, one’s mind must piece together various fragments and memories being otherwise accessed concurrently. *PANIC ARCHITECTURE* was commissioned by the Earle Brown Music Foundation and TIME SPANS Festival, written for the Talea Ensemble and completed in 2017 of June, 17.

soliloquios del viento (2016; rev. 2017)

six singers (s, ms, ct, t, bar, bs) and eight instrumentalists (b.fl, b.cl, t.sx, pno, perc, vln, vla, vc)
 Commissioned by the Royaumont Académie Voix Nouvelles
 Premiered by Talea Ensemble & EXAUDI – 09/09/2016, Asnières-sur-Oise, France
 Sextet + Elec. Version premiered by Ensemble Interface, – 07/02/2017, Valencia, Spain

The musical score for *soliloquios del viento* consists of 14 pages of dense musical notation. It features six vocal parts (Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Counter-Tenor, Tenor, Bass-Baritone, and Bass) and eight instrumental parts (Bassoon, Bass Clarinet, Trombone, Piano, Percussion, Violin, Viola, and Cello). The score includes numerous dynamic markings such as *mp*, *pp*, *f*, and *p*, as well as performance instructions like *rit.*, *accel.*, and *sl. whisper, muttering*. The vocal parts often sing in unison or pairs, while the instruments provide harmonic and rhythmic support. The score is divided into sections by measure numbers (e.g., 3, 5, 8, 4, 8, 5, 8) and includes lyrics in Spanish. The piano part is particularly prominent, providing harmonic and melodic support throughout the piece.



soliloquios del viento was commissioned by Royaumont Académie Voix Nouvelles, written in August of 2016 and premiered by the Talea Ensemble & EXAUDI on September 9, 2016, conducted by James Baker. This fourteen-minute work is a meditation on eight poems of Pablo Neruda, reflecting love, distance, and despair. The six singers are set against eight instrumentalists whose fragile and often voiceless sonorities gently color and obscure the murmuring of the text and pointillistic vocal material. The Spanish text is predominantly obscured and unintelligible, with the themes of Neruda's words instead evoked by the ensemble composite. He writes of two lovers, their romance characterized by abrasion between two barbarous, solitary souls, who consume and destroy one another, intertwined yet divided between new life and inexorable chaos. Neruda's texts evoke not only the conflict between darkness and light in both persons, but through this lens, the experience of being confronted with the subjectivity of another's consciousness. That otherness is manifest in their traumatic, destructive passions, revealing a mutual incoherence and nascency beyond endurance. Each poem seems to represent discrete, or perhaps parallel, alternative scenarios – some in which they are each awoken by their confrontation instead of destroyed – in others suffering one another to the point of intolerable anguish and desolation. Eroticism, abrasion, despair, and desolation run throughout Neruda's evocative language, his lover depicted as an enemy with whom he pleads for voice – who has disgraced their love. For the poet, love is the sole means with which two people may “weather” one another. A source of both euphoria and utter despair, there is a vastness that is evoked in his texts, as if an attempt to span a great distance. Each braves the other, an intimacy and corrosive embrace that both breaks and absolves each person.

Score: <http://bit.ly/2fyzb49>

Audio Recording: <http://bit.ly/2fyBwfD>

Sextet version, Score (with electronics, 2017): <http://bit.ly/2LEJtDd>

Sextet version, Video Recording (with electronics, 2017): <https://vimeo.com/268371130>

Sextet version, Video Recording (with electronics, 2019): <https://vimeo.com/400224384>

walkside, lost (2015)

percussion trio, electronics, and video processing
Commissioned by Gaudeamus Muziekweek
Video: <http://vimeo.com/140159929>
Score: <http://bit.ly/2fFki3X>



gimme shelter (2015)

percussion trio, electronics, and video processing
Commissioned by Eklektro Percussion
Video forthcoming: <http://bit.ly/2hFEBMS>
Score: <http://bit.ly/2fGcqjB>



Slagwerk Den Haag, TivoliVredenburg, Utrecht, NL, Sep. 2015

walkside, lost and **gimme shelter** are two works in a cycle of compositions for three percussionists, electronics, and live video processing on texts by American poet Darcie Dennigan written specifically for these commissions, the first for Gaudeamus Muziekweek & Slagwerk Den Haag, the second for Eklektro Percussion Geneva. The pieces both revolve around the structural intersections of precisely notated gestures that influence human performance with software systems that influence behavior of multimedia, the obfuscation or recontextualization of semantic content in speech, and the way in which confusion and ambiguity distort a participant's perception. The systems I have designed for these works serve to generate reservoirs of video and audio in real-time that are recalled, manipulated, and re-composed against themselves during the live performance in numerous ways throughout the work. Variables for video compositing and audio processing are governed by precise automation of distinct parameters that control the behavior of the system, resulting in visual, aural, and temporal dissonances between multimedia and human performance. To emulate organic, unpredictable behavior, noise is introduced into the system so that these automation values become weighted/biased targets rather than fixed values. Further expansion and development of these software systems will allow the behavior of multimedia elements to be influenced by, and respond to, data parsed directly from the behavior and actions of live performers through the use of sensors, microphones, video data, and motion tracking for enhanced integration between the behavior of the software system and performers to create a dynamic performance environment. These developments will be utilized progressively with each new work in the cycle, a process that will eventually turn back on itself and be retroactively incorporated with each new performance of each work. – Jason Thorpe Buchanan

walkside, lost: Sidewalks are crucial for protests, commuting, parades, playing, and more, but increasingly in America, sidewalks are absent from urban planning. This piece enacts the absurdity of the current American political discourse on public space-- we're not even evolved enough to be at cross purposes. The best one can say is that we're at cross-talks.

gimme shelter: It was Halloween when the New York Times showcased their story of a German town and its 102 inhabitants "bracing" for their mandated embrace of 750 asylum seekers. Catastrophe visits the world's inhabitants unevenly, disproportionately, and then its victims, costumed in their catastrophe, must visit us. **gimme shelter** evokes three starkly contrasting sociopolitical viewpoints in a text written concurrent with the mass exodus of citizens of poor, war-ravaged, and environmentally unstable countries seeking home elsewhere. No single perspective or line is more important here than the other. Rather, consider the accretion of speech in overlapping entreaties alongside the stagnant drone of statistics and rhetoric. We are not free to listen to one side, to make one account readable, livable—hospitable. – Darcie Dennigan

Jason Thorpe Buchanan

Composer & Multimedia/Sound Artist

Jason Thorpe Buchanan is a tri-continentially active composer of electroacoustic, intermedia, operatic, orchestral, and chamber works which explore fragmentation, multiplicity, intelligibility, behavior, and the integration of live performance with technology. He is Artistic Director of the [Switch~ Ensemble] and Artistic Associate/Lecturer in New Media and Digital Technologies for Music at the Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber in Dresden, Germany in the Hybrid Music Lab. He served from 2018-2022 as Department Chair/Lecturer in Composition, Theory, and Electroacoustic Music at the College of Music, Mahidol University in Thailand, 2022 Interim Managing Director of the Mizzou New Music Initiative at the University of Missouri, and 2020 Visiting Lecturer in Composition/Interim Director of the Electronic Music Studios at the Butler School of Music, University of Texas at Austin. His works have been described as “an unearthly collage of sounds”, “sharply-edged”, and “free jazz gone wrong—in a good way.”

As a nominee for the 2015 Gaudeamus Prize, three works were presented by Insomnio, New European Ensemble, and Slagwerk Den Haag at Gaudeamus Muziekweek (NL). His works *walkside, lost* and *gimme shelter* (2015), commissioned by Gaudeamus for Slagwerk Den Haag and by Eklektro Percussion Geneva, both explore the structural intersection of precise physical gestures, fragile sounds, and speech alongside live audio and video processing. As 2018 Artist-In-Residence at the Embassy of Foreign Artists in Geneva, Switzerland, he developed a new, interactive processing environment for *surface, tension* (2018), responding directly to the discrete physical gestures of performers and governing the behavior of both signal processing and triggering through wearable technology, sensors, and gestural tracking.

Scenes from his multimedia opera *Hunger* have received performances at Darmstadt (2014) with Ensemble Interface, The Industry’s FIRST TAKE in L.A. (2015) with wild Up, and the MATA Interval Series in New York City (2015) with the [Switch~ Ensemble]. “*Hunger* is a kind of training session in mental disintegration... An ungodly opera needs ugly music, singers who produce primal sounds, an electric guitar that sounds scraped raw, a wailing orchestra effects, cuts the ear like a knife. Buchanan delivers.” – *L.A. Times*

Jason is the recipient of a 2024 Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship, a 2010 Fulbright Fellowship at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg, Germany as a visiting scholar, commissions from the Mizzou International Composers Festival for Alarm Will Sound (2013), Iktus Percussion (2013), the International Horn Society for the Eastman Musica Nova Ensemble, soloists Jeff Nelsen, Michael Walker, and conductor Brad Lubman (2014), Ensemble Nikel/Tzil Meudcan (Israel, 2014), the Blue Water Chamber Orchestra as winner of Iron Composer (2014), the NY Virtuoso Singers (2015), the Earle Brown Music Foundation for the Talea Ensemble and TIME SPANS Festival (NYC, 2017), the Thailand New Music and Arts Symposium for the TACETi Ensemble and augmented conductor (2019), and for TACETi and extended no-input mixer (2020), a fellowship and commissions from Royaumont for the Talea Ensemble+EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble (2016), and the Académie Voix Nouvelles Ensemble (2017), a German/American Fulbright Commission (2011), the Howard Hanson Orchestral Prize (2014), two ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards (2014 & 2015), an American-Scandinavian Foundation Grant (2015), 2017 Artist-in-Residence at the Brush Creek Foundation (Wyoming), and 2015 Artist-in-Residence at USF Verftet/City Council of Bergen, Norway.

As a guest composer, conductor, and lecturer, he is widely sought internationally at institutions such as the University of Chicago, Stanford University, TRANSIT Festival (Belgium), TIME SPANS (NYC), Chamber Music Campania (Italy), the Eastman School of Music, University of Miami Frost School of Music, Music Science Share Educators Conference (Shanghai), Queens New Music Festival, MATA, the Thailand New Music and Arts Symposium, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory (Singapore), the Bergen Center for Elektronisk Kunst (BEK, Norway), and dozens of Universities throughout the United States. He holds a Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music, and degrees in Composition and Music Technology from San José State University (BM & BA, 2008) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (MM, 2010), where he taught courses in composition and theory as a graduate student. Current projects include a collaborative work for the [Switch~ Ensemble] at EMPAC, and a solo work for violinist Lauren Cauley and a duo for Zach Sheets and T.J. Borden of the [Switch~ Ensemble], all with generative audiovisual processing systems utilizing wearable technology, being developed at the Hybrid Music Lab, Dresden. www.jasonthorpebuchanan.com



upcoming works

The End of Forgetting I

for Zach Sheets and T.J. Borden (2025) – 15'

bass flute, cello, generative electronics, light, live video processing

Hypersigil

Commission: **Hypercube** (2025) – 13'

t.sax, e-gtr., perc, pno, and audiovisual processing system



GRIDS

Commission: **EMPAC/the [Switch~ Ensemble]** (2025) – 22'

b.fl, b.cl, t.sax, pno, perc, vln, vc, sensors
live audiovisual processing system



Traces

for the **TACETi Ensemble** (2026) – 15'

b.flute, b.cl, tbn, e-guitar, cello, audiovisual processing system
IntAct Festival Bangkok & blurred edges Festival, Hamburg

New Work

Commission: Lauren Cauley/the [Switch~ Ensemble] (2026) – 13'

solo violin, sensors, video and electronics



The End of Forgetting II

Commission: **NADAR Ensemble** (2028) – 23'

b.fl, b.cl, e-gtr, perc, vln, vc, and audiovisual processing system