

Free Improvisation (My Skin) *

Meta-Composer, Director, Instigator: Michael Echaniz

For Michael Echaniz and Rachel Epperly

Unpublished

* "(My Skin)" subtitle added post-facto

Instrumentation

Piano (all or no techniques allowed)

Voice (With or without lyrical content, silence permitted)

The performing space

Audience or lack of audience

Description of the Piece

This piece is a totally free, spontaneous, and improvisational musical and lyrical duet, concerning Michael Echaniz and Rachel Epperly, without preconceptions or prompts of any kind. The recorded improvisation occurred around 2pm PST on Wednesday, April 27th, 2022 in Studio A at Capitol Studios in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Background

Rachel and I met in Marc Lowenstein's Words for Music composition class at California Institute of the Arts in Fall, 2021. We explored collaborative composition processes, but eventually began to focus on free improvisation, working through improvisatory games and reflection to expand musical possibilities and avoid contrivances. Over the school year, we performed a variety of spontaneous pieces at recitals and applied and were accepted to record a piece for the prestigious 2022 CalArts Jazz Capitol Studios recording project.

Reflection

This improvisational setting is in a sense, a meeting of worlds. Rachel comes from a primarily classical composition background and I come from a primarily jazz background, although our open-mindedness and extensive interests beyond our respective milieus form a fertile ground for collaboration. On a larger scale, this piece represents a similar meeting point between the free improvisational practices of avant-garde jazz (such as John Coltrane, Anthony Braxton, The Art Ensemble of Chicago, John Zorn, Keith Jarrett) and improvisational concepts in contemporary classical music (Pauline Oliveros, Cornelius Cardew, etc.). Additionally, with the lyrical component, the piece connects to historical styles of spontaneous poetry and prose such as freestyle hip-hop, Basque bertsolaritza, and Beat literature.

Score

The following blank pages represents how while each of us is informed by our past musical training and life experience, we each begin an improvisation with a total blank slate, open to any and all possibilities and present in the moment.

Lyrics (Transcribed and Phrased post-facto)

My skin might be laced with silver lace,

My skin might sheen with emerald green,

My skin might be sharp as the edge of a diamond,

And underneath is the soil where roots of gems grow.

Soil that started when I was born,

Soil that sustains and grows deeper each time I see a song,

Each time I dream a dream that I've forgotten of.

My skin might feel heavy,

My skin might feel too bright,

My skin might feel so far away.

What are these letters and textures and marks?

What are these dances of light inscribed on my body?

My skin is laced with silver lace,

My skin sheens with emerald green,

And though I can never see it with my own eyes,

I can learn to feel it,

I can learn to know the treasures on **my skin**.

Spectrogram (Computed post-facto)

Image created in Sonic Visualizer 4.5.1

