

At some point in listening to *anfa* I hear Claire Chase inhale, and it's so distinctly human a gesture that I feel like I can see the shape of her body and feel the keys of her flute under my fingers. It's arresting because the surrounding sounds unfold from a perspective that's larger and slower than human, something earth-sized, and Chase's inhalation reminds me that her presence (my presence) is as much a part of this surrounding ecosystem as the air.

In this eighth iteration of *Density 2036*, I am haunted by a sense of permeability. Each piece builds its own system of relationships (with places, with sounds, with us), and in each one there is something teeming at the edges, some fresh way of opening. In *Auricular Hearsay*, multimedia artist and composer Matana Roberts focuses their compositional sculpting on performers' states of mind rather than on specific sequences of sounds, using video, graphics, and words as tools for shaping endless possible variations. The multimedia score is inspired by patterns of movement of neurodiverse brains, and the resulting iterations are each unique and grounded in the specific associations and experiences of their performer(s). Two iterations are included here (tracks 1 and 4), both performed as a trio by Chase, Susie Ibarra, and Senem Pirlir. *Auricular Hearsay* pivots on the physiological phenomenon of the "after-image," which Roberts describes as an image that appears in the human eye following exposure to another image. As I listen to Chase, Ibarra, and Pirlir's performances, I feel as though I'm witnessing nebulae birth stars—each new appearance has its root, and yet everything glitters with wonder. Silences spark and expand through the texture. My brain leaps first to ghosts—folds of presence that pull me deeper into this silence—and then to trust: the trust not to fill in what might ignite; the faith to bloom.

The whirl of traffic brings us into the layered world of Wang Lu's *Aftertouch*. Its street-level frames open inward to reveal a pulsing expanse—a techno-club-of-the-mind, pressed deeper and wider by the physicality of Chase's bending lines. *Aftertouch* gets its name from a MIDI keyboard parameter that tracks the pressure on a key after the initial attack, allowing for expressive nuances that would not be registered in the pointillistic action of a traditional piano. It's a conceptual shift from quantum jumps to sustained contact, binaries to multiplicities, and speaks to the ways in which Chase's relationship to Wang joins a rich body of work challenging and blurring traditional roles of performer and composer. *Aftertouch* includes collaborative work with percussionist Russell Greenberg (with whom Wang developed many of the techno-inspired beats) and artist Polly Apfelbaum (whose video for the piece turns spinning pottery bowls into colorful portals for imagination), as well as with percussionist/electronics artist Levy Lorenzo and electronics assistant Jacob Sokolov-Gonzalez.

*anfa*, which means "a disturbance in the elements," is rooted in the Boglands of central Ireland, a sink of carbon-rich life and slow decay that has been mined for peat for centuries. The closure of these bogs to peat harvesting, announced amid international calls to address the climate crisis, leaves these lands in a state of contested suspension. Ann Cleare's composition took shape in conversation with two videos by artist Ailbhe Ní Bhriain, *Vanishing Point* and *Immergence*, each of which pictures a bog in a surreal act of dissolution or obscuring. In the depleted and abandoned bogs, there is a double

absence: of the people whose way of life was wrapped up with the harvesting and burning of peat, and of layers and layers of turf. In Cleare's sounds, absence and possibility mix into something thicker, more alive. Burning is a fast exhalation, and the inhalation of bogs is slow. In *anfa*, Cleare and Chase ask us to breathe on a different scale. The sweeping breath of the contrabass flute gathers sediment and volume through electronic filters, each exhalation blooming into a potency beyond the bounds of its source.

How to move from this place of dense presence and absence? Perhaps alongside Roberts, Chase, Ibarra, and Pirlor, with playfulness and gentle wonder. The performers' voices draw closely together in this second iteration of Roberts's *Auricular Hearsay*. In the fleeting afterimage of this vision, there's a space of trust, the possibility of continuation.

—MICHIKO THEURER