

# *After*sound

## Frequency, Attack, Return

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*Aftersound*—as the composer, Maryanne Amacher explained—is inextricably tied to the concept of an afterimage. In the same way, we continue to “see” an image (light) immediately after we have viewed it under intense circumstances, i.e. strobe effects, direct sunlight, etc., we also continue to “hear” sound after a sounding device or instrument is no longer played.<sup>1</sup> Building on Hermann Helmholtz’s important discovery that the auditory nerves are “set in sympathetic vibration by waves of sound,”<sup>2</sup> Amacher argued that the apparatuses of the inner ear are sounding instruments in and of themselves. But, by intoning the notion of an *afterness* to sound, we are also borrowing from a historical inversion of sound, initiated by John Cage’s overturning and expansion of the definition of silence. Duration replaces pitch. Silence becomes, to borrow from Cage, the absence of intended sounds.<sup>3</sup> The “return” in conventional musical scores is a segment that signals a resolve by revisiting the original key. Even if the composition leads listeners into contrasting worlds—unfamiliar and, sometimes, unsettling—they receive a cue that the work is coming to a close or pointing back to its reassuring original structure. In contrast, *aftersound*—working with the complexities of aural perception—is used to expand and point beyond the work’s surface or structure. In brief, all the artists in *AFTERSOUND*, work through and beyond the physical perceptions that close listening offers us. If there is a return in this work, it is a return to a place *over there*, not the familiar place from which the work began.

1 Eliot Handelman, “Maryanne Amacher,” unpublished interview for *Mondo2000*, 1991), 7.

2 Hermann Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music*, trans. Alexander J. Ellis, (German edition, 1877/New York: Dover, 1954), 129.

3 John Cage, “Experimental Music,” *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 14.

# JOHN CAGE

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John Cage (born, 1912 in LA, California—died, 1992 in NY, New York) is among history's most influential artistic innovators, who broadened the definitions of music, sound, and most importantly, silence. Experimenting with notions of readymade sound, chance operations, duration, indeterminacy, and numerous conceptual innovations, Cage changed the face of Western music and sound compositional processes and performance. By rethinking conventional instruments, he transformed the use of pianos, into sounding objects called “prepared pianos” in which he placed objects between the strings in order to produce percussive and otherworldly sound effects. Likewise, he inspired generations to position radios, record players, and tape recorders at the center of their practices, to see the “electronic” as a new kind of time-based media in sound and performing arts.

By placing a print of one of Cage's early visual scores, *Fontana Mix* (1958), at the center of our exhibition, we are pointing to the vast influence he has had upon generations of artists. In step with Cage, the featured artists in our current exhibition explore edges of temporality, as well as challenge the definitions of traditional notation and performance across audio arts.

# PAUL DEMARINIS

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Paul DeMarinis (Stanford, California) has been making noises with wires, batteries and household appliances since the age of four. One of the first artists to use microcomputers, DeMarinis has toiled since the 1970's in the areas of interactive software, synthetic speech, noise and obsolete or impossible media. He has created installations, performances and public artworks throughout North America, Europe, Australia and Asia, including The Kitchen in New York, Festival d'Automne a Paris, Het Apollohuis in Holland, Ars Electronica in Linz, I.C.C. in Tokyo, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Shanghai Biennale, among many others. He is a Professor in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University in California.

# MICHAEL JOHNSEN

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Michael Johnsen (Pittsburgh) is best known as a performer of live-electronics using an integrated menagerie of custom devices whose idiosyncratic behaviors are revealed through complex interactions. His work is characterized by an intense focus on observation, the way a shepherd watches sheep. The extensive patching of large numbers of devices produces teeming chirps, sudden transients and welcomed modes of failure. In brief, Johnsen embraces the dirt in pure electronics. Recent research includes circuit-level documentation of David Tudor's folkloric homemade instruments. His work has been shown widely at MoMA, SF Cinematheque, Radio France, Wesleyan University, Anthology Film Archives (New York) and Musique Action (France).

# VICTORIA KEDDIE

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Victoria Keddie (New York) works in varying media involving audio/visual signal generation, magnetic field recording, and broadcast. She is Co-director of E.S.P. TV, a nomadic, live TV studio that hybridizes technologies to realize synthetic environments for performance. She has performed and exhibited at numerous venues and festivals throughout the US, such as, the New Museum, the Museum of Arts and Design, The Kitchen, Museum of Moving Image, Issue Project Room, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Her work has also been featured internationally in Dublin, Reykjavik, Berlin, London and Naples. She received her MA from New York University with a focus on the preservation of time-based media.

# JESSE STILES

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Jesse Stiles (Pittsburgh) is an electronic composer, performer, installation artist, and software designer. Stiles' work has been featured at internationally recognized institutions including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Lincoln Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Park Avenue Armory, and Carnegie Hall. He has collaborated with many leading figures in experimental music including Pauline Oliveros, Meredith Monk, David Behrman, and Morton Subotnick. His recordings have been published by Conrex Records, Specific Recordings, Gagarin Records, and Araca Recs. Stiles is currently a Professor in the School of Music at Carnegie Mellon University, where he leads courses on emerging music technologies.

# SERGEI TCHEREPNIN

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Sergei Tcherepnin (New York) composes sound works that are actualized through sculptural forms, objects that exist simultaneously as speakers and instruments. He explores visitors' capacities to affect and be affected by sound through their bodies as much as their auditory systems. His performances and exhibitions include MIT List Visual Arts Center, Boston; The Kitchen, New York; Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pavilion of Georgia at the 55th Venice Biennale; Murray Guy, New York; Karma International, Zurich; Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the 30th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil, just to name a few. He participated in the 2014 Whitney Biennial and is a recipient of 2014 Villa Romana Fellowship in Florence, Italy.

# MARINA ROSENFELD

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Marina Rosenfeld (New York) is known equally as a composer of large-scale performances and an experimental turntablist working with hand-crafted dub plates. She has been a leading voice in the increasing hybridization between the domains of visual art and music with recent solo projects for the Museum of Modern Art in New York; SPOR, Ultima, Wien Modern and Holland Festivals; the Whitney, Liverpool and PERFORMA Biennials; and many others. She has created chamber and choral works, as well as a series of installation/performance works, often mounted in monumental spaces, such as the Park Avenue Armory in New York and Western Australia's Midland Railway Workshops, deploying complexes of unamplified live performers and custom loudspeaker installations. Rosenfeld is Co-chair of Music/Sound, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College.

# CAROLINE RECORD

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Caroline Record (Pittsburgh) is an artist and technologist who uses code to create her own artistic systems. These systems are at once clever and sensual, incorporating extreme tactility with ephemeral, abstract logic. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at the Carnegie Science Center, Space Gallery, The Miller Gallery, and The Brewhouse Association. Fellowships include the Studio for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University, Brewhouse Association Artist in Residence, and Yale University Norfolk. She is a recent graduate of both the BFA School of Art and Human Computer Interaction Masters programs at Carnegie Mellon University.