

Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

Theses and Dissertations

3-15-2022

Open: Mind

Casey Laughlin

Illinois State University, casey.laughlin94@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Laughlin, Casey, "Open: Mind" (2022). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1554.
<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1554>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact ISUREd@ilstu.edu.

OPEN: MIND

CASEY LAUGHLIN

3 Pages

Open: Mind is a musical exploration of the curiosities of reality that exist outside of the “typical” state of human consciousness. I have been fortunate and unfortunate enough to perceive many things that most would consider impossible, and I believe a significant number of these experiences have fundamentally altered who I am as a human being. In consideration of this, my goal in writing and recording this piece was to create a musical representation of some of the sublime, horrific, and Earth-shattering experiences that have shaped me as a person.

Although no score exists for the work, *Open: Mind* is divided into four movements without pause. The piece was composed and recorded over the course of 14 months in Ableton Live using a variety of acoustic and synthesized instruments, and liberally taking advantage of these timbral disparities to create sound worlds that can be both alien and nostalgic.

KEYWORDS: New music, Electronic Music, Music Composition, Microtonality, Art Rock

OPEN: MIND

CASEY LAUGHLIN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

School of Music

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2022

Copyright 2022 Casey Laughlin

OPEN: MIND

CASEY LAUGHLIN

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Roy Magnuson, Chair

Thomas Marko

Matthew Smith

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Drs. Roy Magnuson and Matthew Smith for providing the environment and feedback necessary for me to fully explore electronic music over the past two years, as well as every roommate and family member who has ever had to listen to me make music at the least convenient times possible. I also thank the Friends of the Arts organization for providing partial funding for this work.

C.L.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
INSTRUMENTATION/RECORDING NOTES	2
PROGRAM NOTES	3

Open: Mind

For guitars, brass, and electronics

Casey Laughlin

INSTRUMENTATION/RECORDING NOTES

3 Horns in F

3 Trumpets in B-flat

6 String fretless guitar, doubled ad lib. Tuned to E-flat standard. Exclusively played with an Ebow, allowing for infinite sustain. The Ebow is an inherently imprecise tool; the sound of plastic hitting metal will be picked up when changing strings. Certain notes will take longer to speak than others. Higher harmonics may overtake the fundamental frequency. This is good.

“Filthy” – a heavily saturated synthesizer designed to mimic the aggressive timbres commonly used in modern electronic music. Synthesized using Ableton’s “Analogue” device

Electric organ, digitally synthesized using Ableton’s “Operator” device, designed to mimic a Hammond organ

Found percussion, triggered via MIDI

Many drum sets constructed from Ableton sample packs, triggered via MIDI

8 String electric guitar (F#-B-E-A-D-G-B-E), doubled ad lib.

“Squeals” – another heavily saturated synthesizer, this time restrained to the upper register. A frequency shifter at 34.1% wet signal adds to the instability of this timbre.

Electronic piano, synthesized using Ableton’s “Electric” device.

“Sparkles” – an instrument rack containing Ableton’s “Operator” and “Collision” devices, used in the most extreme upper register. Intended to roughly resemble some sort of electronic bell.

“Growth” – Ableton’s operator device with an extremely slow attack, and an envelope follower controlling a low pass filter cutoff frequency based on the amplitude of the incoming signal. Produces a pronounced “swell” effect.

“Throat and Wash” – A wavetable reproducing the waveforms of me throat singing several different vowels, and the bizarre sound of the squeaky hinge on my parents’ dishwasher door. Tuned to 19EDO. As the wavetable cycles through waveforms, the timbres of the individual samples become more and less dissonant with each other, creating the perception of a slightly oscillating pitch. This is good, especially in consideration of the fact that, if handled correctly, these alterations in perceived pitch can be used to mitigate unwanted dissonances caused by the slight displacement of 19EDO approximations of 12EDO pitch classes.

“Cast Iron” – A 10 inch cast iron skillet struck with a rubber mallet, saturated, and loaded into a sampler. Controlled via MIDI. The bell-like envelope of the original sample in combination with the loop settings of the sampler results in sustained pitches

PROGRAM NOTES

Open: Mind is divided into four main sections, and can be thought of as a sort of “inside out” sonata form. The introduction consists of repetitions of the motivic material in a chaotic way, cycling through the many variations that will occur later in the piece. The second and third sections (4:00-15:00) introduce and develop the motivic ideas in a more traditional way, before they are all recombined in the final 5 minutes, serving as a more coherent and meaningful restatement of the introduction due to the new context within which the ideas are presented.

The two primary motives are occurring in some form during nearly every second of the piece. Almost all percussion tracks were created by layering the “heartbeat” rhythm at different levels of subdivision and borrowed divisions. The melodic motive is hidden within the voice leading of dense harmonic progressions, fragments of it are sequenced in 19EDO, and the rhythmic motive frequently works its way into instances of the melodic. An exhaustive list of the ways these motives are used throughout the piece would be nonsensical in prose—suffice to say, if the listener tries, they will most likely be able to hear one of these motives at any given moment throughout the piece.