

Luc Cianfarani
Fall 2017 Artist Minigrant Outcome Report
4/4/18

Improvisations on a Painting by Jules Olitski

For my Artist Minigrant I requested money needed to finish my piece, *Improvisations on a Painting by Jules Olitski*. The piece is for piano and live electronics, and it was my first exploration into live electroacoustic music. The resulting product was performed at my senior recital in April. With my artist minigrant, I traveled to Glasgow, Scotland to record the samples used in the electronics portion of the piece.

Having previously studied in Glasgow, I was able to have my friend Alexa agree to record the samples for me. I was able to record her playing the piano in a concert hall, which gave me great material to work with. At six points throughout my piece, I trigger samples that were created with a combination of flute recordings that I made last semester, electronic sounds I created in Logic and Max, and the piano recordings I made in Scotland. These sounds are heavily manipulated so that the listener can rarely recognize the difference between the three different sound sources.

Although I am a pianist and I could've taken the grant and recorded the samples myself, it was important for me to work with a different musician. For one, it was informative to see how Alexa responded to my writing. At certain times during our recording session passages, that I thought were notated sufficiently, were not performed the way that I expected them to be. Recording these passages was revealed to me how effective my notation is. For instance, I commonly write quick passages in the high register of the piano to create the effect of shimmering light. My notation however is frequently ambiguous in sections like this, which I realized when recording with Alexa. I have since changed the way I notate many figures for piano. Having a different pianist look at and perform my work highlighted many deficiencies I have in my notation that I would never have realized.

Working with Alexa also served as valuable practice in creating music outside of the confines of a university. I was forced to face the difficulties that all working composers must face in scheduling recording times, finding recording equipment, and making sure sessions run smoothly. This was one of my first experiences in running a session by myself, and the lessons I learned will help me when I become a professional composer.

A link to the premier performance of *Improvisations on a Painting by Jules Olitski* can be found here <https://youtu.be/swrrKgMyOCc>

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