

The Department of Music, Wesleyan University
Movement House
and Performing Artservices
present

AMERICAN OPERA: ROBERT ASHLEY

A Celebration



PREFACE

Throughout a long career Robert Ashley did an astonishing thing. He turned speech into music. The origins of speech and music are mysterious. One cannot be sure which came first. One can imagine that the first human utterances were intoned, chanted, if not melodic. Song may have been the precursor of speech. Or they both may have developed simultaneously. It is lovely to imagine early humans singing to each other. Ashley's speech-song seems to me to be a combination of both. It is fascinating to hear the characters in Bob's operas singing and talking at the same time. The listener's attention moves to three places: the meaning of the words, the melody they create and a combination of both. Basically, Ashley regarded speech as music. I remember standing with him at gatherings after concerts in the Midwest, simply listening to people talking. He once remarked that, to his ears, the dull roar of many people talking was symphonic. Once as an accompaniment to a Merce Cunningham event in New York, Bob simply assembled a group of friends to sit on stage and have a conversation. There was no text, no instructions, no enhancements, no musical accompaniment. It was amazing just how riveting this experience was. One left the event wondering how Bob could have made this happen.

– Alvin Lucier, March 12, 2014 (for *Frieze*)

WEEKEND PROGRAM

Organized by Alvin Lucier, Mimi Johnson, Paula Matthusen

Friday, March 2, 2018 at 8:00 p.m.

Thomas Buckner Concert

Works by Robert Ashley and Alvin Lucier

Saturday, March 3, 2018 at 11:00 a.m.

Stories about Bob

David Behrman, Thomas Buckner, Alvin Lucier

Saturday, March 3, 2018, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Symposium

Kyle Gann

Alex Waterman

Tom Hamilton

Saturday, March 3, 2018 at 8:00 p.m.

Crash

Sunday, March 4, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

Varispeed's arrangement of "The Bank"

Episode III of *Perfect Lives*

Anthony Hernandez, CFA Technical Associate

Robert Russo, CFA Assistant Technical Director/Sound and Video Specialist

Deb Shore, Administrative Assistant, Department of Music

and Students of the Wesleyan University Department of Music

Friday, March 2, 2018
8 p.m.

The Department of Music, Wesleyan University
presents

Thomas Buckner, baritone

Works by Robert Ashley and Alvin Lucier

with

Neely Bruce, piano
Paula Matthusen, chorus director
Students of Wesleyan University's Department of Music
Jordan Dykstra, Matt Wellins, recording and playback

CFA Crowell Concert Hall
50 Wyllys Avenue, Middletown

The Producer Speaks (1991)

Music and Libretto, Robert Ashley

Thomas Buckner, voice

Neely Bruce, piano

In *The Producer Speaks* the singer is encouraged to allow the rhythms and melodies associated with the language to affect the monody of the narrative in the most spontaneous manner. In other words, to just “sing” the story. This element of spontaneous “invention”, so unique to the nature of speaking and singing, and so different from improvisation on an instrument, is the basic technique of *Atalanta (Acts of God)*. In this concert version of the aria the meter of the line is preserved, but the grouping of the lines within the harmonic pattern (and in counterpoint to the instrumental theme) is freely determined by the soloist. *The Producer Speaks* is the principal “Anecdote” of the “Bud” section of *Atalanta (Acts of God)*.

Tract (1992)

Robert Ashley

Thomas Buckner, voice

Recorded electronic orchestra by Robert Ashley and Tom Hamilton

Tract was composed and abandoned for its impracticalities nearly forty years ago. The idea that was driving my musical imagination then was that pitches, as distinct members of a harmonic “aura” (without reference to harmonic “architecture” - that is, without reference to what a succession of harmonies could produce as a musical form), could be thought of independently of their sound on a particular instrument. In other words, while the sum of the notated pitches indicated a “background” harmony, their actual realization on particular instruments, taking into account overtone structures and other aspects of “color,” made an essentially different composition for different combinations of instruments. I think this idea is peculiarly “American” – it addresses a poverty of real resources – and it is peculiarly a foreshadowing of electronic techniques. It is, moreover, indebted to the notion of composition that composers got from the most advanced thinking in jazz at that time.

The idea of *Tract* is that there is an implicit harmony in the combined five-line polyphony of pitches, but that the harmony is not necessarily “there” and that at any moment in the composition any number of those pitches (including all of them) could be dissonant to the implied harmony. In the technique of *Tract* those dissonances are always unresolved “suspensions;” that is, they point to a consonant resolution, whether or not the implicit harmony has in fact changed by the time of the resolution. (Obviously, there are other ways of thinking of this matter of a harmonic “aura,” for instance dissonance for its own sake, as part of the “aura,” but *Tract* is simply a score for five voices in counterpoint.)

I am deeply indebted to Thomas Buckner for encouraging me to try to see this idea through, even though it is so different from my current musical concerns. I had considered it, along with other pieces from that time, as “the one that got away,” and it was remembered with a kind of unresolved sadness. Hours of discussions between us, helped by Tom’s love of jazz and knowledge about how these ideas might be related to jazz (though *Tract* is not a jazz composition), persuaded me to try a realization with the help of electronic technology. Even then, though, the obstacles were formidable. What an instrumentalist can do with a sophisticated change of embouchure to identify the harmonic neighborhood of a specific pitch has to be discovered and spelled out for the synthesizer. Ingredients have to be added to the tone. After we had begun the piece, with the pitches programmed into the computer, I started looking forward with dread to another period of forty years of making the thing work. Finally, I decided to surrender to the circumstances and simply add the implied harmony (the “aura”) to the mix. I think this decision has not destroyed the piece. It is something of a setback for the “theory,” but then the piece wasn’t written to prove a theory. It was written because that’s the way I heard things then. – Robert Ashley, 1995

The Mystery of the River (1991-2014)

Music and Libretto, Robert Ashley

Recorded electronic orchestra arranged by Tom Hamilton

Thomas Buckner, voice

The Mystery of the River is part of the opera, *Atalanta (Acts of God)*. *The Mystery of the River* is one of the “Family Stories” from the “Willard” section of *Atalanta (Acts of God)*. It explores the opera’s themes of collective memory, architecture, and genealogy.

In his Afterword to Burning Books’ published libretto of *Atalanta (Acts of God)*, Ashley writes: “One evening, standing on the roof of my building, with the Atalanta building on my left and Lucille (Ashley’s “guardian angel” from *Perfect Lives*) six stories below sitting in the park, I began to understand triangulation, that is, the measurement of Earth, and how the legendary great buildings could have other, mysterious, meanings: how the pyramids at Giza could represent (in the details of geometry) both the Egyptian empire of that time and the shape of the Earth, its rotation around the sun, the ecliptic, and all the facts of geometry that are so dear to present-day science. I couldn’t do the calculations, but I began to understand. Twelve blocks to the south was the World Trade Center, also in view, another work of architectural majesty. And I realized that “The Law,” the rules of society, is expressed in those buildings.

“So the first “theme” of *Atalanta (Acts of God)* was the notion of The Law being expressed in architecture. I was fascinated by the history of the Tennessee Valley Authority—claimed to be the “greatest earth-moving project in history”—some forty

dams built on the eastern tributaries of the Mississippi River, authorized to produce electrical power for some of the poorest people in the United States. Still, to this day, the T.V.A. is surrounded in controversy because it didn't change much of anything. The T.V.A. got into the opera.”

The Mystery of the River was completed in this version for solo voice and electronics when the Angelica Festival (Bologna, Italy) asked for a new work.

Litany (2018)

Alvin Lucier

for Male Voice, Chorus and Unattended Piano

Thomas Buckner, voice

Paula Matthusen, chorus director

Students of Wesleyan University's Department of Music

Jordan Dykstra, Matt Wellins, recording and playback

Saturday, March 3, 2018
11:00 a.m.

The Department of Music, Wesleyan University

*Coffee and Stories with
Robert Ashley's Friends and Collaborators*

conversation with

David Behrman

Thomas Buckner

Alvin Lucier

Russell House
350 High Street, Middletown

Saturday, March 3, 2018
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The Department of Music, Wesleyan University

presents

AMERICAN OPERA:
ROBERT ASHLEY

Kyle Gann

“Eventfulness is really boring”: Robert Ashley as Minimalist

Tom Hamilton

*“Push RECORD Before We Change Our Minds”:
Music Production in Robert Ashley’s Operas*

Alex Waterman

“you guys are all” or “there’s something about fourness”

(order t.b.d.)

Russell House
350 High Street, Middletown



PHOTO © IMARY LUCIER

TOP AND RIGHT:
The Sonic Arts Union:
Robert Ashley,
Alvin Lucier,
Gordon Mumma,
David Behrman



PHOTO © RALPH NORMAN



PHOTO © RALPH NORMAN

BOTTOM:
"The Band"



PHOTO © PETER ROSS 1998



PHOTO © MIMI JOHNSON



TOP: *Celestial Excursions*,
with Joan Jonas

LEFT: Mimi and Bob

BOTTOM: "The New Band"
plus the production crew of
Crash at the Whitney



PHOTO © PAULA COURT 2014

Saturday, March 3, 2018
8:00 p.m.

The Department of Music, Wesleyan University

presents

Robert Ashley
Crash

Music and Libretto
Robert Ashley

Singers
Gelsey Bell, Amirtha Kidambi, Brian McCorkle,
Paul Pinto, Dave Ruder and Aliza Simons

Music Director and Sound Mix
Tom Hamilton

Photographs: Philip Makanna
Projectionist: Andie Springer

Producer
Mimi Johnson
Performing Artseries

CFA Ring Family Performing Arts Hall
287 Washington Terrace, Middletown

Crash is an opera for six voices and a three-person photo-projection score. The opera lasts ninety minutes and is played in six short, continuous acts. *Crash* is about a man, unidentified, but clearly an older man—the man-subject. We learn of his attitudes and his prejudices. We learn about his history as a member of a certain economic and social class.

Crash has three very different singing Characters. One Character is a person singing as if speaking on the telephone; that is, with the particular, brief intimacy that comes in phone conversations. The singer is trying to explain three important ideas: 1) the powerful cycles measured in number of years, “The Seven Ages of Man,” that drive us; 2) the problem of being small in our society; 3) neighbors and the problems we sometimes have with them.

The second Character is a person singing in a detached, deliberate style, as if reading a classic poem. The text describes a peculiar physical and mental problem the man-subject has.

The third Character is reciting, very briefly, the important events and ideas the man-subject has lived through. This singing Character has an almost unnoticeable vocal tic, a kind of rarely heard stutter. (This vocal tic is from the composer’s personal experience.)

The six singers rotate through the three Characters over the six acts. Thus, each singer will be heard portraying each of the three Characters once. This technique will highlight for the audience the unique vocal qualities of each singer, as in the aria technique in traditional opera. The three singers not singing as characters in any particular act sing as a vocal “orchestra” to accompany the three soloists. The music of the opera is entirely vocal. All of the singing is very soft vocally, but amplified, and all of the singing of the words is very fast. This is a special kind of vocal sound that the audience will have rarely experienced. This vocal sound distinguishes *Crash* as an opera.

Throughout the opera there will be three simultaneous, but not synchronized, projections of photographs depicting vast, beautiful landscapes. The technique of the photo-projection is intended to allow the audience to hear the singing and the texts without typical visual distractions, creating an ideal situation for a special kind of meditation. [Note: for the Wesleyan University performance, the photographs will be projected on one screen.]

– Robert Ashley, 2013

Sunday, March 4, 2018
1 p.m.

Movement House at Wesleyan University
presents

Varispeed's arrangement of
"The Bank" from Robert Ashley's opera for television,
Perfect Lives

Varispeed
Gelsey Bell (keyboard, vocals) Brian McCorkle (lead),
Paul Pinto (drums, vocals), Dave Ruder (guitar, vocals)
Aliza Simons (euphonium, vocals)

Movement House
200 High Street, Middletown

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Robert Ashley's operas are “American” both in their subject matter and in their use of American language. *Fanfare Magazine* called Ashley's *Perfect Lives* “nothing less than the first American opera...,” and *The Village Voice* comments, “When the 21st Century glances back to see where the future of opera came from, Ashley, like Monteverdi before him, is going to look like a radical new beginning.” A prolific composer and writer, Ashley's operas are “so vast in their vision that they are comparable only to Wagner's *Ring* cycle or Stockhausen's seven-evening *Licht* cycle. In form and content, in musical, vocal, literary and media technique, they are, however, comparable to nothing else.” (*The Los Angeles Times*).

Ashley was educated at the University of Michigan (Mus.B., 1952, Music Theory) and at the Manhattan School of Music (Mus.M., 1954, Piano and Composition.) From 1957 to 1960 he continued to study Composition and Acoustics at the University of Michigan's Speech Research Laboratories (psycho-acoustics and cultural speech patterns), and was employed as a Research Assistant in Acoustics at the Architectural Research Laboratory.

Ashley co-organized Ann Arbor's ONCE Festival and directed the ONCE Group, for whom Ashley developed and produced the first of his mixed-media operas, notably *That Morning Thing* (revived in 2011 by Performa and the Kitchen). His principal income during this period was derived from films and film music, providing sound tracks for industrial, educational, and advertising films. He also produced original music and sound tracks for several art films by George Manupelli.

In 1969, appointed Director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College (Oakland, California), he organized the first public-access music and media facility. From 1966 to 1976 he toured throughout the United States and Europe with the Sonic Arts Union. In 1975–76 Ashley produced and directed *Music with Roots in the Aether*, a 14-hour television opera/documentary about the work and ideas of seven American composers.

The Kitchen commissioned *Perfect Lives* for television production, and after developing the opera in live tour performances, *Perfect Lives* was co-produced with Great Britain's arts network, Channel Four. It is widely considered to be the precursor of “music-television.” In recent years, several groups have revived *Perfect Lives* in various forms, notably Varispeed's site-specific daylong live version, Trystero's 3-1/2-hour marathon performances, and Matmos's individual episodes in “pop” venues.

Robert Ashley's core ensemble (Sam Ashley, Tom Buckner, Tom Hamilton, Jacqueline Humbert, Joan La Barbara and “Blue” Gene Tyranny) performed and toured the operas *Perfect Lives*, *Atalanta (Acts of God)*, the tetralogy *Now Eleanor's Idea*, *Dust*, *Celestial Excursions*, and *The Old Man Lives in Concrete*, throughout Europe, Asia and the United States.

When he died, Ashley was at work on two new operas: *Crash* was premiered at the 2014 Whitney Biennial by the young artists he cast; and *Quicksand*, an “opera-novel,” read and recorded by Ashley himself, was completed by his collaborators

Tom Hamilton, David Moodey and Steve Paxton, for its premiere at The Kitchen in January 2016.

Recorded music and video is available from Lovely Music, New World Records, Alga Marghen, Unsounds, Nonesuch/Elektra, Mainstream, CBS Odyssey, O.O. Discs, Ellipsis Arts, Koch International, and Einstein Records.

Ashley's books, *Music with Roots in the Aether*, *Perfect Lives*, *Outside of Time: Ideas about Music*, *Atalanta (Acts of God)* and *Quicksand*, were published by Burning Books (Santa Fe), MusikTexte (Köln) and the Dalkey Archive Press. A biography, by Kyle Gann, was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2012.

David Behrman has been active as a composer and artist since the 1960s. Over the years he has made sound and multimedia installations as well as compositions for performance in concerts. *My Dear Siegfried*, *Leapday Night*, *On the Other Ocean*, *Interspecies Smalltalk* and *Open Space with Brass* are among Behrman's works for soloists and ensembles. Among his sound and multimedia installations are *Cloud Music* (a collaboration with Robert Watts and Bob Diamond); *Pen Light* (2002), and *View Finder* (2005.) *Cloud Music* was acquired (2013) into the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Museum. Together with Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier and Gordon Mumma, Behrman founded the Sonic Arts Union in 1966. Sonic Arts performed extensively in North America and Europe from 1966 till 1976. He was co-director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College from 1975 to 1980. Over a period of several decades Behrman was associated as composer / performer with the Cunningham Dance Company and received commissions to compose music for several of the repertory dances. The first of those, "Walkaround Time" from 1968, was revised and restaged last year for the Paris Opera Ballet. During the sixties and seventies he assisted John Cage and David Tudor with several projects, among them "9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering" (EAT) in 1966. Behrman has received grants, commissions and residencies from various sources, among them the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the DAAD, the Atlantic Center for the Arts and the Japan / United States Friendship Commission. In 2016 he held the Inge Maren Otto composer's fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin.

Gelsey Bell is a singer, songwriter, and scholar. Her performance creations have been presented internationally and she has released multiple albums, including the recent *Ciphony*, with John King, and *Toyland*, with Joseph White. She is a core member of thingNY, Varispeed, and the Chutneys. She is currently the EtM Ridgewood Bushwick Composer-in-Residence, she received a 2017 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award, and was an artist-in-residence at Roulette in 2015/16. Her works include *Bathroom Songs*, *Scaling*, *Our Defensive Measurements*, *This Takes Place Close By* (with thingNY), *Prisoner's Song* (with Erik Ruin), and the acclaimed adaptation of Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives* (with Varispeed). Other performance highlights include Dave Malloy's *Natasha, Pierre, & the Great Comet of 1812* (Broadway) and *Ghost Quartet*, Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler's *River of Fundament*, Kate Soper's *Here Be Sirens*, and Gregory

Whitehead's *On the Shore Dimly Seen*. She has a PhD in Performance Studies from NYU and is the Critical Acts Co-editor for TDR/The Drama Review and the Reviews Editor for The Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies.
www.gelseybell.com

Neely Bruce, John Spencer Camp Professor of Music at Wesleyan University, is a composer, conductor, pianist and scholar of American music. Bruce's undergraduate degree is from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, and his DMA in theory and composition is from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His principal teachers were Ben Johnston, Hubert Kessler, J. F. Goossen, Lara Hoggard, Charles Hamm, Byrnell Figler, Roy McAllister, Soulima Stravinsky, and Sophia Rosoff. Bruce was one of the seven harpsichordists in the 1969 premiere of *HPSCHD* by John Cage and Lejaren Hiller. He has been visiting professor and artist-in-residence at Middlebury College, Bucknell University, the University of Michigan, and at Brooklyn College. He is the first pianist ever to play the entire solo vocal oeuvre of Charles Ives. He is the composer of three full-length operas, including a new version of *Hansel and Gretel*, which incorporates American popular music – rock, pop, rap, country western, etc. His dramatic oratorio *Circular 14*, about the heroic life of Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, was premiered earlier this year in Salt Lake City at the Mormon Tabernacle by 500 performers, conducted by Barlow Bradford.

For decades, baritone **Thomas Buckner** has dedicated himself to the promotion and performance of new and improvised music, collaborating with a host of new music luminaries including Robert Ashley, Noah Creshevsky, Tom Hamilton, Earl Howard, Matthias Kaul, Leroy Jenkins, Bun Ching Lam, Annea Lockwood, Roscoe Mitchell, Phill Niblock, Wadada Leo Smith, Chinary Ung, Christian Wolff and many others. Buckner has appeared at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, the Herbst Theatre, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Berlin Spring Festival, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the Prague Spring Festival, and the Angelica Festival of Bologna. He is featured on over 50 recordings, including 6 solo albums, the most recent being “New Music for Baritone & Chamber Ensemble,” which includes works by Annea Lockwood, Tania Leon, and Petr Kotik. Buckner also appears in the newly released CD/DVD “Kirili et le Nymphéas (Hommage à Monet)” filmed at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, which houses the Monet's celebrated *Water Lilies* murals. For the past twenty-nine years Thomas Buckner has curated the Interpretations series in New York City, and continues to produce recordings on the Mutable Music label, introducing current artists and repertoire, as well as presenting important historic material, previously unavailable in CD format.

Kyle Gann (b. 1955 in Dallas, Texas) is a composer and was new-music critic for the *Village Voice* from 1986 to 2005. Since 1997 he has taught at Bard College. He is the author of seven books on American music, including books on Conlon Nancarrow, Robert Ashley, John Cage's *4'33"*, and Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata*. He studied composition with Ben Johnston, Morton Feldman,

and Peter Gena, and much of his music is microtonal. His major works include the piano concerto *Sunken City*, *Transcendental Sonnets* for chorus and orchestra, the microtonal music theater piece *Custer and Sitting Bull*, *The Planets* for mixed octet and *Hyperchromatica* for three retuned, computer-driven pianos. His music is available on the New Albion, New World, Cold Blue, Lovely Music, Mode, Other Minds, Meyer Media, New Tone, Microfest, and Monroe Street labels.

Tom Hamilton has combined the activities of audio production and music composition into an artistic career of over 5 decades. Since 1990, Hamilton has been a member of the composer Robert Ashley's touring opera ensemble, performing sound processing and mixing in both recordings and concerts. He has recently been involved as Music Director in productions of Ashley's operas *Crash* and *Improvement (Don Leaves Linda)*, and composed and produced the music for productions of Ashley's *Quicksand* and *A Last Futile Stab at Fun*. His audio production is found on over 100 recordings of prominent contemporary musicians. Hamilton's music references the 1970s era of analog electronics, and contrasts structure with improvisation and textural electronics with acoustic instruments. He employs "aural scores" to connect performers to a changing context of electronic sound, prompting the use of "present-time listening" by both performer and listener. Hamilton is a Fellow of the Civitella Ranieri Foundation and is the recipient of a Prix Ars Electronica award.

Amirtha Kidambi's musical interests range from South Indian Carnatic to New Music and the Avant-Garde. As a soloist, collaborator and ensemble member in groups such as the experimental Medieval folk band Seven Teares, the DIY percussion group Ashcan Orchestra, and vocal quartet Elizabeth-Caroline Unit, Amirtha has performed in a variety of venues from DIY spaces to concert halls including Carnegie Hall, Issue Project Room, Silent Barn, Whitney Museum, (Le) Poisson Rouge and the Kitchen. Recent projects include Apollo's *Accidental Answer*, a chamber opera with Pat Spadine's Ashcan Orchestra, the premiere of AACM founder and legendary composer/pianist Muhal Richard Abrams' *Dialogue Social*, and *The Oversoul Manual* by Darius Jones. Amirtha has had the great honor of working with Robert Ashley since 2011 in *That Morning Thing* and the premiere of *World War III (Just the Highlights)*. She was the recipient of the Jerome Foundation's Emerging Artist Commission for Roulette in the 2015 season, performing new compositions for her band Elder Ones.

Alvin Lucier is an American composer of experimental music. He is the author of *Music 109: Notes on Experimental Music*, co-author, with Douglas Simon, of *Chambers*, and editor of *Eight Lectures on Experimental Music*, all published by Wesleyan University Press. *Reflections/Reflexionen*, a bi-lingual edition of Lucier's scores, interviews and writings was published by MusikTexte, Köln. Lucier was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music and received an honorary doctorate of arts from the University of Plymouth, England. He taught at Brandeis University, where he conducted the Brandeis

University Chamber Chorus, which devoted much of its time to the performance of new music, and Wesleyan University, from which he retired in 2011. Along with Robert Ashley, David Behrman and Gordon Mumma he co-founded the Sonic Arts Union. Lucier has produced a range of important compositions that have influenced the culture of experimental music and the sonic arts. Early works such as *Music for Solo Performer* (1965), *Vespers* (1968), *I am sitting in a room* (1970), and *Bird and Person Dying* (1975) establish a clear thread throughout his long career. His recorded music is available from Lovely Music, New World Records, Wergo, and Pogus. The Zurich University of the Arts (www.zhdk.ch/en/lucier) recently published a limited edition box set that includes four LPs, a CD, as well as a discursive publication of essays, interviews, scientific articles and archival photos edited by Bernhard Rietbrock.

Philip Makanna is a painter/sculptor/photographer, originally from New York, who has lived in San Francisco since the 1960s. Examples of his photography can be found in the Sam Wagstaff Collection at the Getty Museum and in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Art. He has made five major films and received major film awards. He was the founder and director of the Fine Arts Video Center at CCA. Robert Ashley provided music for Makanna's films *Battery Davis* and *Shoot the Whale* and Makanna collaborated with Ashley on the 14-hour video opera/documentary, *Music with Roots in the Aether* (artistic direction and video camera). Five books of Makanna's aviation photography have been published. Since 1980 his photographs of lovingly restored and maintained World War I and World War II aircraft (in flight) have been featured annually in the calendars *Ghosts, a Time Remembered* and *Ghosts of the Great War*.

Paula Matthusen is Associate Professor of Music at Wesleyan University, teaching experimental music composition, and music technology. She was formerly Director of Music Technology at Florida International University, where she founded the FLEA Laptop Ensemble. Her Ph.D. is from New York University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Matthusen writes both electroacoustic and acoustic music and realizes sound installations. In addition to writing for a variety of different ensembles, she also collaborates with choreographers and theater companies. Her work often considers discrepancies in musical space – real, imagined, and remembered. She was the 2014 Elliott Carter Rome Prize fellow and has also held residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, create@iEar at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, STEIM, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts.

Brian McCorkle is a composer, performer, and digital artist. In addition to his solo work and with the composer's collective Varispeed, he is the Co-Director of the Panoply Performance Laboratory (PPL) with Esther Neff. PPL makes large scale performance art operas in addition to duo and small group performances around the world. PPL also operates a space for experimental music and performance in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. www.brianmccorkle.work

Paul Pinto creates, performs and produces experimental music and opera-theater that fuses the musicality of American speech, poetry, classical music, extended vocal techniques and electronic sound art. He is a founding member of the acclaimed collectives Varispeed and thingNY. Paul has presented music across the U.S. and internationally. As a vocalist, Paul works on a diverse array of new projects including performing the lead role in Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, originating the role of Balaga in Dave Malloy and Rachel Chavkin's Broadway musical *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, and interpreting the work of Robert Ashley. His latest album *minis/Trajectories* with thingNY features eight of his verbose chamber compositions. In fall 2017, Paul premiered his newest opera *Thomas Paine in Violence* with Joan La Barbara.

Dave Ruder is a Brooklyn-based multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, composer, etc. In addition to Varispeed, Dave is also a member of experimental ensemble thingNY and repetitive rock band Reps. Dave founded and runs the label Gold Bolus Recordings, where you can find a number of his solo albums, including *Qualms Rectified* from 2017. As an undergrad at Wesleyan (class of '05), Dave became enamored with the music of Robert Ashley and is delighted to be coming full circle in bringing this music to Middletown. In addition to *Crash* and *Perfect Lives*, Dave has performed numerous works of Ashley's including *That Morning Thing*, *Trios (White on White)*, *World War III (Just the Highlights)*, and *Public Opinion Descends Upon the Demonstrators*. www.daveruder.com

Aliza Simons is a performer, potter and native New Yorker. As a student at Wesleyan University in 2005, she took Music 109 with Alvin Lucier and never looked back. A founding member of the composer-performer collective Varispeed, she has performed Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives* with the gang in Pittsburgh, Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Catskills, and Jersey City. She had the honor of working directly with Robert Ashley to perform *That Morning Thing* and *World War III: Just the Highlights* in 2011. She also designs and creates a line of handmade tabletop ceramics under the name Henry Street Studio.

Alex Waterman is committed to the practice of living a more musical life and exploring the many ways that the social body sounds. He is an artist and writer working with sound installations, film, video, and text. Cello and live electronics have been at the center of his performance practice for many years and he has appeared as a soloist and alongside ensembles in the U.S. and Europe, including Champs d'Action, Q02, Plus Minus Ensemble, Either/Or, and Argento. Alex has produced five books on notation and poetics with Will Holder, and has published articles and essays for Wesleyan University Press, *Artforum*, *Bomb*, *The Third Rail*, *Dot dot dot*, and many others. Alex was an artist in the 2014 Whitney Biennial where he directed three operas by Robert Ashley, including a Spanish language, live television adaptation of Ashley's *Perfect Lives*. Alex is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Wesleyan University.