

Improvising a Tradition: Miya Masaoka in Conversation with Mark Laver

February 23, 2012.

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ML: So, I'm Mark Laver. I'm one of the Postdoctoral Fellows with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. It's my pleasure to interview 2012 Improviser in Residence, Miya Masaoka.

MM: Thank you.

ML: I have a whole bunch of stuff to ask you about and I guess we'll just keep blasting through ideas until we either run out of ideas or run out of time, or tape.

The first thing that I was wondering about, just sort of broadly, is your artistic practice, because you seem to work in so many different idioms, and so many different media, and do so many different kinds of things that it really calls into question all kinds of ways in which art is categorized and binarized, and split. You seem to challenge a lot of those kinds of ideas. So, I was wondering, with that in mind, how would you identify or describe your artistic practice.

MM: Well, I would say it definitely has different kinds of fronts, or takes different forms, and over the years it's changed as well. But even ten years ago I was working with sounds of insects, and using light sensors, and actually I hacked into burglar alarms, for the movement of insects making their own sounds, and creating their own piece. I would be naked on a table and then the beams would go across my body, and the movement of the cockroaches on me would create the sounds of the piece, because they would trigger their own sounds amplified.

At that time there wasn't a word for sound art. And I think sound, it's hybrid in nature, and it can include, say, music, architecture, the resonance of sound in a space, how those things can interact with each other, sculpture, and of course sound and radio and how sound gets transmitted through air waves, or through air, or from a person to another person. So, these boundaries are by nature very porous and fluid. And I've always approached my work that way. I've often thought of different projects as kind of being inquiries, or trying to find something out about something. For example, what would it be like to take the activity of the human brain and the sounds of the body and, creating an orchestra piece, different kinds of sounds layered upon each other with these different kinds of activities of the human body. So I got lots of donations from hospitals for medical equipment, and I got fetal heart monitors, and online I purchased a brainwave analyzer, and got advice from David Rosenberg, who is kind of like the grandfather of biofeedback from the 1970s. And so, a lot of it was some kind of an inquiry into something that sparked my interest, and would possibly spark other people's interest, too. And as a result, brainwave activity led to what happens when... plants activity definitely responds to activities of humans...so it led to a whole body of work using plants as activators for sound.

So there were different kinds of journeys that would happen. But they all had some kind of relationship to the natural world, and were relevant to this residency and to improvisation as well. I have a long background in improvisation, jazz, classical music, Japanese music, electronic music. I first started making electronic music when it was just splicing tape and we didn't have digital music in those days. Literally, we took razor blades and had big, monster patch cables and created sounds, this

old way now, where the digital world uses the metaphors of the analog to kind of recreate some of these ideas of cutting and splicing and editing, etc.

ML: So, in a situation where you are putting electrodes on plants or using fetal heart monitors, how does improvisation play into that process? Either in terms of the process of creating the piece, or in the actual performance of the piece, how is improvisation a part of that for you?

MM: Well, for the plant piece—it's called "Pieces For Plants"—there were a number of iterations. And there were installations and people would come up and they would discover what sounds it was going to make when they approach it, fast or slow, or walk by it? So their response would have an aspect of improvisation, I would say.

ML: Maybe this is kind of a Cagean question or something, but is the plant improvising too?

MM: That's not for me to say. I think that working with plants, and having them in my studio, it was really astonishing to me how the plants over time, and different plants—I used mostly philodendrons and semi-tropical plants because these were very responsive plants—they have to grow fast in their natural environments so they have to decide if they are going to wrap their vines around one area or around another area, another tree or something. These root centers of plants actually work like networks, and for people who want to study the networks, even network technology, we can look at the root systems of plants because they definitely have, you wouldn't say a brain but they have areas of activity where there is more activity; a kind of centralized concentration of activity. They are responding to their environment. And it was shocking to me, how responsive they were if I were to walk at quite a distance away. They would respond. From an evolutionary point of view, for their survival, they need to have a relationship with insects and birds, etc., for pollination, etc. So, they are very much attuned to living things around them. I think in ten years there will be so much more information about what's going on with their root systems and their process that we don't know about yet.

Even since the time I've been doing this project, new information has come out. Like the ultraviolet ability of plants to distinguish between different kinds of light. And more neural centers, and there's been more information coming out and investigated. So it's interesting. It's fascinating for me.

ML: So, how do the pieces you've put together using plants, how do those compare to pieces you've put together using brain waves? Or the piece, "What is the Sound of Ten Naked Asian Men?"

MM: Okay, that was a long time ago, and that was using the sounds of the body in terms of creating some kind of a sonic environment, and having the source as being this kind of organic body that creates activity that can make sound. So, I also, going from the body creating activity, I did something called the "LED Kimono" where I sewed 500 individual LED lights into a grid on a kimono sleeve. So it becomes a flexible low-resolution monitor. And having real time and interaction with, say, arms moving and that getting reflected in a kind of shadow life onto the kimono, or having traditional kimono patterns, it kind of morphed and changed depending on the movements of the wearer. More recently I've gone from organic to non-organic material, but there's still a sense of responsiveness, and inter-activity, and improvisation. Even within composed pieces, I think. I think improvisation, it's not a part of everything often, but it's a very important part of some of the work.

ML: Right, I mean that's...I'm trying to decide the order in which to ask these questions...because there are two questions that are very related. First of all, I was wondering about bodies. A lot of the sound art pieces that you've developed seem to require the performers to be nude. Or there are a number of pieces where you've worked with nude bodies, either your own, or with the public piece you've written for ten naked male bodies. Basically, I'm wondering if you could talk about how your work with bodies in vulnerable or naked states, your work with plants or animals, insects, different things from the natural world, how does that kind of organic thing interact with the very hypermodern frameworks that you developed for those pieces involving lasers, or different kinds of computer processes, or the EKG monitors? Basically, how does the organic interact with the hypermodern for you as you are developing these pieces, and what are you trying to explore by bringing these things together?

MM: Well, you know, something interesting, I think, about Shintoism, which is that there are these spirits that reside in stones, and trees, and rivers, and in these things in the natural world. And there is actually, somewhat, a relationship between Shintoism—which is this indigenous Japanese cultural religion; a way of thinking about your world—to neuroscience, and what kinds of energies are embedded in certain kinds of things. I guess I don't make a distinction between the organic and the inorganic. Because there are aspects of the inorganic into the organic, and vice versa. In a sense, you asked about bodies, and if you think about the koto, it's like a resonating body with strings and it's very similar. And if you just take bodies of humans you are working with the basic, from the ground up, what you have before you have on all the clothes, or the electronics, or anything else. It's kind of like starting with a resonating body, or a human body. So it's just kind of starting and then building up from there. I guess it's just a way of thinking about it conceptually, of human beings, before all these other things are layered onto them, like clothes, or culture, or race, or gender even. There's just this body.

Actually, the earlier piece with cockroaches, again, that had to do with Japanese Americans and concentration camps. The government had ordered that you had to go to the concentration camps, the Japanese camps, if you were, I think it was, one-sixth Japanese blood. So it's this very conceptual idea because who has that amount? Nobody did in the early 40s. And so it was just this concept, an abstract, erroneous concept, that anybody would even have that. But if you did, that would be the beginning point of when you would have to go to the camps. So it was this idea that there is this body, and then all these other ideas can be put upon it. But first you just have this body.

And it was also around the time when they had DNA research coming out, and of course now it's old hat, but saying that the amount of difference for gender and for race, and for all these things, was very, very miniscule. So it was going with some new research that was going on, as well.

ML: So when you start to develop a piece like this, do you use... you have an experimental kind of aesthetic, would it be fair to say?

MM: Well, I guess. Yah, sure [laughs].

ML: I'm wondering when you start developing a piece, do you begin with a hypothesis, or do you begin with a framework? Do you sort of take the scientific method?

MM: Well, I think a couple things. Two nights ago I had a vision for a new piece. And it just kind of came completely intuitively. It was what five or six, maybe five to eight performers would do on a stage together. So, I just had this vision of it. Then, intuitively, different things come, like, oh, this could mean that, and that could mean this. It goes about itself in a different way too.

ML: So then as you're developing the piece, you talk about composition and you operate as a composer in some situations?

MM: Yah, I mean that's my training in formal school.

ML: Right. So how do composition and improvisation work together for you? Does one facilitate the other?

MM: Well, you know, I don't have that binary going on. And I think we should kind of do away with that binary because it's kind of artificial, in a certain sense. And it's a boundary that has long ago been challenged, because as we know just in our thought process, our behavior, or how we think in our daily lives, embody different processes, planned out strategies, fixed strategies, and how they can be changed and what's going to happen. So that's a boundary that gets placed upon people but it's actually not the heart of things.

ML: So, the heart of things then is this... what is the heart of things?

MM: [laughs] At the heart of things, I guess, is how to work and mediate whatever materials you have. And so I think that's the heart of things. But that's a silly word [laughs]... heart of things.

ML: Well, no, now we know. I guess the other thing I was going to ask you about... you talked a lot about Japanese heritage, and so I'm wondering how your own consciousness of the history of Japanese Americans, and how the work that you've done, studying gagaku, how all of those things come to play in your artistic practice.

MM: Well, I grew up in the Bay Area, in California, and that's where there is a concentration of Japanese Americans, and Japanese Canadians too, on that coastline. And I grew up playing the piano. Then, there was a—quote unquote—“Asian American movement” going on that I became a part of later. So, there were a lot of musicians, like Jon Jang, and Francis Wong, and Mark Izu, and people playing, and so I became a part of that scene because we were friends, and we were working together, and there was Asian Improv aRts and there were different organizations around, Asian American-based kinds of organizations. And then, at that time, I also put together a gagaku group. I brought in a teacher who traced his gagaku roots from 1200 years, back to the Tang Dynasty. And he had played the hichirikis in his family from the Tang Dynasty. So, this is a fascinating opportunity to study with somebody like that over an extended period of time. I would fly him up, I think once a month, and got this group of people, and we would pay his flight, and we wouldn't pay him very much. It was very kind for him to come to us. And eventually he went back to Japan, and that's when the group fell apart. So that's how I became involved in gagaku.

ML: Your study of the koto, has that come out of your study of gagaku?

MM: No, I've studied different schools of it, in San Francisco, one in Japan, and New York, different schools that have slightly different techniques and different scores. I'm actually enjoying right now playing this one-stringed koto, which a friend of mine, whose also a teacher, Izumiya Gishi, she has a one-string koto from a family that got a national treasure award. I have that in my hotel room. There is something very conceptual about a one-stringed koto, which right now is very inspiring to me.

ML: Is it more limiting in terms of things that are available to you? Presumably, you have to work within a much more rigid set of strictures than you would with many strings.

MM: Well, one thing that's nice about it doesn't have any frets, so you choose the pitches, and you choose the scales, or whatever sound you have. There is a fair amount of freedom, given you have just one string because you can just do whatever you want with it. But right now, I am transferring some traditional koto pieces to this one string. It will eventually reap something, but right now it's a lot of fun.

ML: Right. I guess I ask that partly by way of leading into a question about improvisation and structure, in a sense. I don't know very much about the history of the koto but, from what I understand, gagaku is a millennia old tradition with an extremely rigid performance structure, one that's supposed to be repeated again, and again, and again.

MM: Well, originally, it wasn't. Gagaku, when it was developing, it had different tuning pieces, and the music has changed quite a bit over the years. Just like anything else, things get frozen in time, in the way that maybe jazz has gotten frozen for a bit. [laughs]

ML: Maybe it's starting to melt a little bit.

MM: Yah, yah. But actually there is a lot of interesting things with jazz. I have a long history playing jazz as well, both on the piano, and different things on the koto, and I've had the amazing opportunity to play with people like Ornette Coleman, and Pharoah Sanders, where I kind of got my start, I think. I learned a lot of things when I was playing with Pharoah Sanders for a couple weekends at this club called Yoshi's in San Francisco. Being in a group with Cecil Taylor and Steve Coleman, and just a whole lot of different ways that people like Cecil, first generation—quote unquote—"jazz musicians"... And it's very inspiring. I learned a tremendous amount.

ML: So how do you position yourself within these different trajectories of traditions? Does that make any sense? Or when you're performing are you thinking about these, either the new thing, the free jazz tradition, or the gagaku tradition, the ways in which your music is placed in those trajectories?

MM: You know I guess I don't think about it. In some ways, it just becomes a part of you, your experiences, you become this thing where these experiences make up who you are. Sorry, I'm not articulating that very well. We are hybrid beings, so I guess we function as these creatures that are patch-worked together in a sense.

ML: Would it be fair to say that you are like...

MM: Frankenstein?

ML: Frankenstein, or improvising a tradition in a way?

MM: Well, definitely. I definitely feel very connected to different kinds of traditions but, of course, the rupture is something that is very important for artistic fields because at a certain point, just as the Rolling Stones had to rupture out of the traditional blues patterns that they were inspired by originally, it's the rupture that's key. I keep saying these different things are key. Isn't that silly. But it's important to have some element of rupture going on.

ML: And is that as a performer? Or are you trying to enable that kind of rupture for your audience? Or both.

MM: Well, I think, in a sense, it's always good if the audience goes away thinking about something, maybe a little differently. Maybe there has been some kind of transformation that has taken place, whether they think, "Oh, I've never thought about that that way," or "Oh, that was interesting," or "All of a sudden I'm thinking about how you listen to things differently." Even the early futurists from 1913, Russolo and Marinetti, and those guys, Russolo was actually was on a campaign later to get audiences to listen differently, and to educate audiences just how to listen to other sounds in their environment. And how to think about those sounds as being part of the whole, part of a listening experience, as you would an orchestra, and how these sounds could be incorporated into an orchestra situation, or a chamber situation. That effort has been going on, of course, since the turn of the century, that century. Of course, there have been more progressions with Cage and Pauline Oliveros, with different ways of listening, and working, and training people to listen differently, how to listen in kind of an active listening or creative way. So, all of these have to do with change or transformation, or rupture, whatever terms.

ML: I am wondering if you can talk about that a little bit more specifically with some of the pieces that you've worked on, the ones that I've spent the most time thinking about, like the one with insects.

MM: You know, sometimes they are not specifically about rupture. But it's, again, taking and transforming some kind of something. Even if it's just the materiality of something, whether it's thinking about sound in objects, or how sounds go from one object to another object, or resonating surfaces, or different kinds of amplification of something and how that gets perceived by the ear. There's a whole lot of ways of thinking about that.

ML: Are there specific things that you hope your audience will get from these pieces?

MM: Well, it's always the greatest thing if people find it somewhat engaging, or they like it somewhat, or somehow it's interrupted their natural flow of something, or there's been something that has some element of stimulation and engagement. That's always a good thing.

ML: We just tried to create some kind of rupture at the Planet Bean.

MM: Right. That was very fun.

ML: I'm wondering if you can reflect on what we were working with.

MM: The thing is, you go into a situation like that, you don't know what to expect, you don't know if there is going to be belligerent people in the cafe, or what. Or you don't know how things are going to sound, or what the interaction is going to be. So, there are a lot of unknowns. And people are surprised. They are not expecting something. And, hopefully, they are engaged in some way that's positive.

ML: Well, we sort of touched on this a little bit, but I'm wondering if you could talk about the interventionist aspect of what you do as an artist. We've talked about rupture, and we've talked about experimentation...

MM: Well, there's an aspect of intervention too. I was living in a castle in the fall, actually, in Warsaw, and going to Russia and playing in abandoned factories there. And getting film recordings of working factories, and playing in working factories. So, there is a way of inserting oneself into a completely incongruous situation that I'm still working out... if there is any meaning to be derived from these activities... but completely out of context. So actually I'm doing that now, in different ways, these kinds interventions of sorts.

ML: So, what do you hope to achieve?

MM: Well, that's a very good question. Again, there's the architectural space of sound and then there's the cultural space of sound. Actually, I used to work in a factory for many, many years. I worked in a factory full-time for four and half years, from the time I was a teenager. It was an industrial factory; we made trucks. People don't make trucks here, or maybe in Canada so much, or even the United States. A lot of the manufacturing has gone over seas. So, this was in the days when there were factories everywhere. And, I just became interested in re-connecting with that whole past because I'd worked for so long in factories. And people are like, "What is a factory?" They don't even exist anymore. Or very few of them do. So, the whole modernity and the repetition of an object, and being able to replicate something over and over again, which has been such an important concept in art and music—repetition—whether it's looping, and replication of CDs, a file, so much of this is so embodied in this old machinery and the factories where you replicated making something. And so, I want to explore that again. I've finally entered the stage of, yes, my whole life used to be factories, and now I'm looking at machine sounds, industrial sounds, playing in abandoned factories, playing in working factories, thinking about machines. I'm kind of entering this phase right now.

ML: Are you thinking about those in the same way that you would think about a plant?

MM: I'm just starting to think about it, playing in Russia and Warsaw. But I'm sure that some of those aspects of the organic and the inorganic, and the resonating bodies, and response and interactivity, will provide some element in things.

ML: Right, right. The other area of stuff that I wanted to talk about had to do with pedagogy. Is there a pedagogical aspect to this question of rupture or intervention?

MM: Not at all. No, not at all. I don't have that bone within me, for my work. No, I don't think so.

ML: You do have a very long teaching résumé.

MM: Actually, I do very little. I teach right now at Bard College, for maybe the past seven years, in the Milton Avery Masters of Fine Arts program. It's an arts school, essentially. But actually I don't do that much teaching throughout the year.

ML: What do you do at Bard College?

MM: Well, I teach at Bard College, but it's a summer program so it's just a few weeks in the summer.

ML: And you're coaching ensembles, or working with individual improvisers?

MM: No, it's an art school. It's studio-based, and so the program is called Music/Sound. Because the whole idea of what is music, what is sound, is becoming whittled away, and this emerging field of sound studies is beginning to emerge that some of the time straddles music, and sometimes straddles visual art. It is inherently interdisciplinary, and using different kinds of trans-border crossing. So it's working with students in critiquing. And it is studio visits, the heart of the program is studio visits and the students learn from each other in studio critiques.

ML: So, it's new to you, then, I guess?

MM: No, no. I've been teaching on and off, of course. Teaching piano since I was in high school.

ML: It just hasn't been a priority for you?

MM: I just haven't done that much of it.

ML: I guess I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your experience here, like the little bit of teaching that you've done at Homewood, or the couple of things you've done in the high schools. What do you hope to bring to the students that you've worked with here, and maybe what have you gotten out of the experience here?

MM: Well, there were different high school groups of students that they brought together. So there was this amalgamation of...this concert band, this vocal group... So it was different groups put together. I definitely enjoyed working with them, and basically did some conduction things with them. And they said that they had not been exposed to that before, any conduction. So that was very good for them. For example, these gestures would represent what sounds they would play on their instrument. So if it was like this [gestures with her hands], they would play a long sound. If it was like this [points at the air], they would play some kind of pointillism, [gestures up and down], louder, softer. And then, I would have the students conduct themselves, as well, breaking down a little bit of the hierarchy. When you're in concert band, you go all the time to this really hierarchic situation. So it was kind of breaking down some of that.

ML: What's the value of breaking down those kinds of hierarchies?

MM: Well, it got them to completely think about how they relate to each other musically. It was completely different from what they had done before. They enjoyed it. I try to get them to laugh. That's my goal, to try to get them, at least some of them, to laugh some of the time.

ML Why is laughing important?

MM: Well, it just adds an element of pure pleasure. Especially, for some of these kids, it's 7:30 in the morning! You know, it's really hard.

ML: I was out there, I was at Centennial a few weeks ago, and I had to leave my house at 5:30 in the morning.

MM: Oh no! [laughs]

ML: It was difficult for me to laugh when I got there. I can't imagine how they do it so early. The last question that I had for you, then, is maybe the easiest but maybe also the hugest. Basically I'm wondering about what excites you about art, your art? Or maybe other artists that you've seen working. What are you excited about?

MM: I always like to see a certain kind of awe take place. That's A-W-E. A certain kind of breaking out of the mundane, banal feeling, and being just transported, whether that's spiritually, or intellectually, or something, some kind of out-of-body something that's goes from engagement to something else more mystical. And that doesn't always happen. And I'm lying, because that's not always what I enjoy either. But something that can be challenging in some way, is what I enjoy.

ML: Right, just still that idea of transcendence?

MM: Well, it's not essential. But I think when it comes to art, you just want to be taken to another place.

ML: What are you working on right now?

MM: I'm working on a couple things. One of them is called "Triangle of Resistance," and it's a collaboration with a video artist, Michelle Handelman. It's looking at three different historical points of departure. One is the Japanese American camps, one is the Russian revolution, and one is Rosa Luxemburg. And these are places to land at various points, but there will be things in the future, and things will be very abstract.

ML: And this is involving field recordings?

MM: Some of the field recordings I did in Warsaw and Russia. She's going to shoot some new material, and it's going to be involving some musicians, and different things, the video.

ML: How does improvisation play into that project? Or are you thinking about it in those terms?

MM: Well, probably there will be areas where people improvise, some improvisation will be required, skills.

ML: So you are sort of developing frameworks for the performance to be improvising within, in some fashion.

MM: Right. Some kinds of pieces, and some areas.

ML: Right. How does it work across media? I've done a lot of improvising on a musical instrument, and I know how that works, but how does the idea of improvisation translate across artistic media, either on this project, or on other things you've worked on?

MM: Well, it's very easy because it's such a natural form. When I've done improvisation with different ensembles which are located in different cities, and improvising over the internet, a lot of the same things apply: which is really listening in a different kind of a way, in an experienced, and knowledgeable, and virtuosic way. Really, how to listen to things in the background and the foreground, things that you can pick up on. That's where the amazing things about the human

brain...That is really hard to replicate in artificial intelligence, being able to have a realm of sounds going on, and really being able to identify conversations going on in different places. And that's something that artificial intelligence can't do. It just hears these different things. But something about the human brain, we can hear this conversation going on here, and that going on over there, these things, and we can identify them and hear them separately. So it's taking this ability that humans have to make, that kind of listening, as well as being able to listen and respond, and listen and respond, and know how to respond. It's kind of a trained listening and responding, listening and responding, that kind of thing.

ML: So how is that similar or different, that kind of responsiveness that happens... When you're playing in a group situation, it's clear to me how that kind of responsiveness and collaboration would develop, but when you're playing solo—and I've seen you play solo many times—how does it work in that setting?

MM: Playing solo?

ML: Mm hmm. As a solo improviser, how does that kind of responsiveness, or interacting with those multiple levels of listening, how does that translate into a solo performance?

MM: I don't know, but it just flashed as you were asking this question, and I thought, maybe something happens where you start divide yourself into multiple selves in your brain. And one brain will think of some kind of rhythmic possibilities or looping possibilities, and another takes another part of the personality or self and says something timbral, grating, something sustained. And so I think different parts, we separate our self-playing solo, and then go into these different bags of ourselves.

ML: Right. Right. As a saxophone player, I think in terms of the solo improvising that I've done. I think about single notes, or singular areas that I'm working within, because I can really... there are extended techniques, but for the most part I choose to play one note at a time. So I wonder if that kind of compartmentalization of your own brain when you are playing solo, is that concept facilitated by playing an instrument where you have multiple things happening?

MM: No, I'm just talking off the top of my head. As you're talking now, I'm thinking, that's part of it, but another thing is just taking in the whole experience as the whole. So it's definitely multitasking in the way that people can. So, it's both taking in—how did you describe it, what you just said, what saxophones do?—oh, a single note, you have a kind of linearity, but then you also have things going on horizontally, and interrupting, things to draw from, different wells to draw from. And taking people on some kind of voyage, some kind of a something. It's the same, what we're talking about.

ML: And how about the experimental pieces that you've done? I'm thinking specifically about the piece for bees. You've worked with bees a little bit, and I noticed you using what sounded to me like a beehive effect when you were playing with the cymbal. I've having trouble describing it, but there was something to me that sounded like a beehive that you were playing on the koto. And maybe it was just because I'd read about your piece with bees and so I was looking for you to do bee stuff.

MM: [laughs] Well, Japanese music has a long history of insects and birds.

Videographer: Beetles too, right?

MM: Beetles, yes. It's not treating the insect sounds as leitmotifs, or a Wagnerian sense of a motive, or some representational sound, but it's actually, more literally, THE sound. It's the actual sound of this kind of bird or that kind of bird, or this thing. But I'm sorry, I lost my train of thought for a second.

ML: Well, that's basically what I was asking. How does the repertoire of experimental pieces you've done with different kinds of animals, or different kinds of physiological (or whatever the word is) sounds, play into your vocabulary as an improviser?

MM: Well, I think the mediation of technology and electronics is something that improvisers don't seem to embrace as much as one would expect. I think rock guitarists certainly do, with all the foot pedals, etc., but there are whole areas of technology that can really facilitate and mediate through sounds in ways that improvisers don't so much. And I kind of know possibly why that is: because there is a real aversion to electronics that the old jazz schools really hold close to their heart. I think because of this love of the acoustic, or this kind of purity of something, that perhaps electronics has not been embraced as much as it could have, and not explored as much as it could have by improvisers. Which is too bad. There are a lot of cultural social reasons for that, I'm sure.

ML: I feel like there is another question that comes out of that, and I'm not sure how to phrase it.

MM: But that's changing. And it will be a really different world for improvisers, as well, when people are reaching to different kinds of media, and thinking about things in addition to their acoustic instrument as modes of exploring their world and making sounds. And organizing sounds out of chaos, which is essentially everything that we're talking about.

ML: I guess that was kind of my question: Where do you see the music moving, and what do you think needs to happen?

MM: Well, I definitely think it's moving out of the thing that we call music, and the thing that was from the 1913 futurists onwards, and not just the futurists but even all these other kinds of musics that work so richly with timbre—African music, or Asian music—that have transcended these boundaries, the more rigid ideas of what pitch should be, and what timbre and rhythm should be. There is this whole area of sound studies, and working with sound, and organizing sound in ways that I think is really emerging and changing things, changing.

ML: Right. Well, that feels like a good place to maybe conclude the conversation.

MM: Okay. Well, thank you so much. It's been fun.

ML: It's been a real treat to talk with you, and to play with you, and to have you around. So, thank you. Miya Masaoka.