

## Dialogue between Hasunuma Shuta and Matsui Midori (art critic)

Date: 9 May, 2018 6:00–8:00pm

Venue: WORD Shiseido



**H**=Hasunuma, **M**=Matsui, **T**=Toyoda

**T:** This exhibition had its beginnings partly in the comment by Hasunuma-san that, having been engaged in his activities for just over a decade, he was eager to start something new. So in this evening's talk we hope to hear about both his activities to date, and his plans for the future.

Hasunuma-san's career has been distinguished thus far by the incredible range of methods employed in his expression: he works in the domains of music and art, but within that, may do so solo, with his orchestra, or in collaborations involving other genres such as film and dance. In the field of art, his practice encompasses the making of sculptures and installations, and giving performances. Tonight he will discuss these activities with art critic Matsui Midori.

Allow me to present Hasunuma Shuta and Matsui Midori. Over to you.

**H:** Good evening, I'm looking forward to chatting with Matsui-san here for an hour and a half or so today.

I'll begin by explaining a little about myself. In my work, I go by the title *ongakuka* (musician). Which is a really handy term that means to compose and/or perform—a bit of a magic word, in my view. In modern Japanese parlance the English word “musician” generally calls to mind a rock guitarist, something to do with pop music, while “composer” immediately evokes associations

with classical music. Plus there is the word “artist”. But if I were to call myself an “artist”, would that be a sound artist using sound, or an artist of the sound variety doing technology art? Even a single title can be highly ambiguous, have multiple meanings in both Japanese and English, so I prefer to stick with *ongakuka*.

There are several reasons for that, but in the end, I make tunes, so to speak. I record music, that you can listen to on some sort of media, in the course of day-to-day life, and for this exhibition at the Shiseido Gallery, I've produced works that employ music and sound as mediums. I also provide music for movies and dance. So I work on a wide range of things.

As to how it ended up like this, allow me to briefly explain, in chronological order. I've never put together a band, and never studied any music as a student. The first remotely musical thing I ever did was starting field recordings as a student. When I say start, it wasn't so much recording on my own initiative as taking recordings in order to keep a record, make observations, as part of fieldwork in my course. Observing various phenomena, I mean. Sounds recorded in that manner would change subtly over a certain period of time. I'd record things and listen to them, record and listen, over and over again. I suspect that is how I started “making works.” It was after this that I produced my first piece of work, a recorded album of music. In other words, using recording media. My activities started not with live performances or playing music, but making a recording.

From there I put together an ensemble, staged exhibitions, embarked on what we term collaborations with other genres, and generally progressed to making works using music, across multiple domains. I suppose that describes how I got to where I am.

**M:** Good evening everyone, and thank you for coming out on this rainy evening. For me, Hasunuma-san is someone that it is a little pointless trying to categorize as an artist of the fine art variety, or a composer. I see him rather as an artist in the broader sense, who takes his own feelings about sounds and spaces, about human sensations

and activities and emotions, and endeavors to express them mainly through the medium of sound.

Until recently my dealings with Hasunuma-san in a musical sense had been limited, so figuring I was somewhat of a neophyte when it came to his work, I put together some questions, after a fashion, in the process coming up with five points that help us to understand his work. These are listed on the handout, so can I ask you to turn your attention to that for a moment.

The plan is for today's talk to progress as a back-and-forth of ideas, in which I ask a question, and Hasunuma-san answers by whatever means he chooses.

Let's start with No.1: "Installing something like sound in spaces." This was also the slogan for a 2013 show by Hasunuma-san in Asahi Art Square. I interpret this phrase as meaning to create an environment in which the spectator moves around the space in a different manner from usual, and can hear the sounds there from various directions and distances, and in various states. In other words, creating an environment in which the spectator can become conscious of him or herself as the actor in the listening, the center.

No.2 is "Showing new interpretations of sound." That is to say, what is that "something like sound" of which Hasunuma-san speaks? To this are added his own original aural interpretations. Not just traditional interpretation of music, or physical auditory phenomena, but perhaps also including his approach of weaving in the voices of people passing by, for example, or ambient noise. However, I think that more than this, it points to an approach of working movements, acts, and visual experiences into the realm of the auditory experience.

Then there is No.3: "Going to a place, studying the properties of that place, and putting together an exhibit to fit." This refers to, when invited somewhere to do a project, working in close consultation with people whom he would not usually encounter in his musical activities, such as curators, and staff setting up the exhibits, who have become involved at the planning and execution stages. This means activities of the type referred to in contemporary art jargon as

"site-specific" or "relational art" that involve building new relationships through art, and adopting the stance that developing such relationships is the goal of artistic activity.

No.4 is "Also delivering music to audiences in the traditional formats in which people enjoy music, such as concerts" through the musical activities of groups like Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra. This type of activity differs from what Hasunuma-san refers to as his "experimental" side. Rather than positing dichotomies of artist versus audience, art versus the everyday, or experiment versus entertainment, Hasunuma-san takes a more flexible approach. My guess would be that underlying this is a desire to give something to the audience that goes beyond the avant-garde action of negating, of rejecting aesthetics and entertainment.

No.5 is a "bonus" point in a sense, but in fact to me the most important question of all: one concerning his "ongoing awareness that human beings live amid the whole of creation: flora and fauna, weather, temperature, architecture, day-to-day routines and the workings of nature, as well as an accumulation of cultural and social actions." Valuing the sense of being blessed that this gives, is I believe an attitude that connects Hasunuma-san's musical activities as a composer and work as an artist composing spaces.

I've thus explained just the main points; now I would like to ask Hasunuma-san to unravel all that a little at a time.

For my first question then, as indicated in the phrase "Installing something like sound in spaces," you started off with composing, doing work generally seen as the job of a composer, then went on to exhibit at art museums and art spaces, and conduct events, but what was the significance of exhibiting at museums and art spaces, and what were you hoping to achieve? Was there something you were unable to achieve entirely in your work as a composer?

**H:** Assuming for example that you were to start by dividing my output between the musical, that is my work as a composer, so to speak, and giving concerts; and exhibiting at

museums and art spaces, I'd say for me, the foundation of making music is recording. Obviously, this is partly because as mentioned at the beginning, my activities began with recording. Making modern music is not only about writing staff notation; there are also many opportunities to use a computer. This involves feeding sounds into the computer, building up multiple aural layers, and editing this to process the waveforms and turn them into music. Making music this way is nothing new, having been well established in the 1990s.

When doing this, for instance you might position a microphone which would pick up sounds. These become waveforms, and just at the point I had grasped the processing of waveforms like that as a premise for music, a small gallery space known as the Pavilion happened to open at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, in 2012. I was offered the opportunity to use that space for something, and that was how it all started. It was a setting for presenting my works in a place called an art space.

In that work, I stretched my interpretation of the process used to make music. By which I mean, obviously I do field recordings, and as you know field recordings are sound so you use your ears, but when I'm actually doing field recording, where am I looking? Does a visual point exist? This is the question I asked. What I mean is, if you put a microphone in a place it will just record sound indiscriminately. A microphone has no brain. The microphone does not think to itself, ooh this is a good sound, and operate by itself. So a microphone cannot be made to work unless the person doing the recording works it. In other words, I was sensing there had to be a focusing of some sort.

Obviously a microphone also has directionality, and there is the question of what angle to record from, but the same applies to a camera, and I was interested in the relationship between the visual and aural, that is, where the capture is occurring.

I positioned a video camera in the place I was hoping to record sound, and recorded sound and images at the same time. I then edited this recorded video footage in the same manner I do when making music. In the production process I use a computer, and the

making of video and music are based on virtually the same process. I made a work in which three videos are played simultaneously to become one piece of music.

Thinking about it, there are plenty of works like that in art history.

**M:** Can you give us an example?

**H:** I suppose one of Christian Marclay's video installations would be the closest.

**M:** I see. When I spoke of "making the audience sense the music by the way the images are linked," I was thinking of someone other than Marclay. I didn't necessarily mean a musician who uses video in his or her work.

**H:** Ah, OK.

**M:** I prefer to think of as "musical" that intuition, prior to verbalization, when a person senses something—not a rhythm or tune or suchlike—amid the flow that emerges when one video moves to the next, before the video is received by people as meaning, grasps what they are feeling now as an organic experience, a way of joining video that captures that process, before it is verbalized, that way of viewing things with the senses before they are verbalized or given meaning.

**H:** That's exactly right: what you mean is before it becomes words, information.

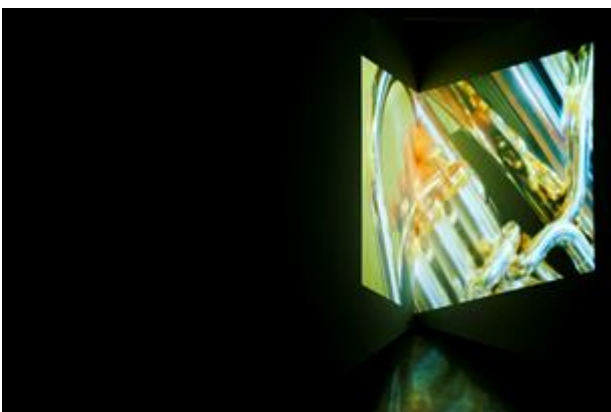
**M:** Before it takes on meaning.

**H:** Moving on to the next sequence before it takes on any meaning is exactly like that. Another thing is—and this is the amazing thing about sound—video is 24 frames per second, but with sound, you can zoom a lot. Which means you can edit much more precisely than with video, say move 0.001 seconds back, which you can't do with video, so moving micro amounts of sound data in that sense allows you to make music.

**M:** Would our audience be able to see a concrete example of this kind of sound editing?

**H:** Certainly. Allow me to run the actual video presented at the Museum of Contemporary

Art Tokyo Bloomberg Pavilion while giving a brief commentary. I had people perform a few different environmental sounds plus guitar, drums, double bass, sax and steel pan, with me playing a piano exhumed from the depths of the museum's storeroom, and recorded and filmed it all. I set up the video camera and recorder in a fixed position from the perspective of my view of the instruments (things making sounds). The concept was one of three videos running on a loop of about 45 minutes, replayed in sync to form music. The space was designed by Hirata Akihisa, and is shaped like a triangular prism-shaped box, with lots of natural light during the day, meaning the video is not visible. That is to say, during the day, it is as if only the sound is playing. I made it into a video installation that gradually looms into sight toward evening as the natural light diminishes.



*have a go at flying from music part 3*  
Bloomberg Pavilion, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, 2013

**M:** It strikes me that this pavilion work was important in terms of you being an artist who

started with sound, and moved on to engage with the visual and space as well.

**H:** Yes, it was.

**M:** Do you have any other landmark works you would like to discuss here?

**H:** One of the five things you listed for understanding my work was "installing something like sound in spaces," and for me, this is something common to every one of my actions. In saying that, putting sound into the space of a record is cutting a record. Though not works, the act of exploring the sound relationships in a space for a gig or concert: deciding where to position the musicians, whether to amplify a certain instrument, or whether to make other sounds together with the live sound, how to add variation to the overall sound, is something I do frequently anyway.

Musicians in my view fundamentally have an excellent sense of space and time, if that's how one could describe it. The same for performers. I think they are good at sensing what the reaction will be in this space, at this time, to something they have made and laid down.

The Pavilion at MOT was followed by the show at Asahi Art Square.

**M:** That was 2013, wasn't it.

**H:** That's right, 2013. I did an exhibition titled "soundlike." Unfortunately Asahi Art Square closed in 2016, but they ran this project dubbed "Grow-up Artist" in which one young artist would be chosen each year and asked to do something in the Art Square. I was lucky enough to be selected, and every month would head to Art Square, where I would research various things about the venue, under the title of "STUDIES." I ran discussions, events, tried making studies for actual works for exhibitions, all in public. In saying that, this was on weekdays, so it wasn't exactly thronged with visitors.

**M:** Kind of workshops?

**H:** Yes, workshops. Rather than giving the events names that would explain them, that



is, saying, "This is a workshop," I was conscious of a kind of "STUDIES" vibe, of stuff just somehow happening. It felt like the "soundlike" exhibition came about as a presentation of the results of those studies. Those were also studies in a real sense for me, and a period of taking time for each, to construct how I would exhibit them.

**M:** It was a building unusual in structure, so you came up with a device that allowed spectators to walk in a different way from usual.

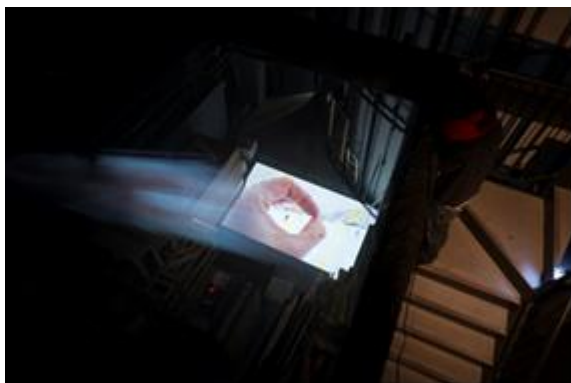
**H:** That's right. A different route to follow than the usual for an art exhibition. I deliberated at some length on the effect it might have to place this kind of work when the viewing order was different.

**M:** Do you have any images of that?

**H:** I'll show some pictures and video.

**M:** If you could please, and tell us about them.

Plays footage



*soundlike*  
Asahi Art Square 2013

**M:** Asahi Art Square was actually only used to display art relatively infrequently, wasn't it; it was more often a venue for theater or dance performances. It was a long, narrow building.

**H:** Yes, long and narrow, and oval in shape.

**M:** Irregular, then.

**H:** Yes. Designed by Philippe Starck... and I suspect we'll come back to this later; architectural structures, the spaces of a building, have a major impact on sound. Sound goes around this space in a very distinctive manner, not like normal at all. The question was how to deal with this challenge, I guess you could say, or rather how to use it to my advantage, and I pondered this a lot as I went along.

In the venue there are all kinds of sounds. Elements of those sounds include for example the sound of a video playing. Further back in the space, is a video of a person reading aloud. The voice of a narrator can be heard from somewhere. However, because

the space has this peculiar shape, unless you stand right in front of the video, you can only hear the sound. I filmed this kind of video also as part of the “STUDIES” project. This revolving kinetic work, with sound almost like glass waves revolving cyclically, in a space where all kinds of sounds mixed together...

**M:** Was that “sounds will spin”?

**H:** Yes, it was the piece called “sounds will spin.”

**M:** This work was a special device for making sound: can you give us a close-up image of it?

**H:** Certainly.



*sounds will spin 2013*

We humans recognize sounds, how they turn sounds into music... at the time I was interested in that human awareness of capturing sounds. Even without me arbitrarily making music, by arranging just sounds in a space, surely the audience in the space would turn that into music of their own volition? This was another sort of practice, a study.

To speak a little more of awareness, I've put together an ensemble by the name of Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra, which for the last seven or eight years more or less has been giving concerts not every month, but certainly several times a year. In 2013, around the same time as the “soundlike” exhibition, I tried setting up a stage in the middle of a space, and giving a live performance with the audience surrounding the ensemble. The sound was

amplified, the sound from the amp coming through speakers placed in the four corners of the space. Which means that the live audience listened to, and recognized as music, the single piece of music we were performing, through four speakers.

Under those conditions, for instance if a euphonium player is in front of the audience, they will pick up the sound of a euphonium, from among the various sounds present in the space. The visual aspect on this occasion—a live concert being a performance—meant that the way people perceive sounds from the bodily actions of the playing, and think, ah, this is the sound of a euphonium, was interesting. I imagine from this, from performing live, I was also thinking about the gap in awareness, and the relationship, between hearing and vision.

**M:** So you created an environment that allowed the audience to not only pick up various sounds in the venue, but subjectively recognize them as sounds.

This reminds me of what John Cage wrote about the “sound spaces” created by experimental music. This is the quote from “Experimental Music,” a 1955 article by Cage, excerpts of which appear on the handout. Allow me to explain a little. It says, “Here we are concerned with the coexistence of dissimilars, and the central points where fusion occurs are many: the ears of the listeners, wherever they are.” Cage is writing about the kind of listening experience that is the goal of a new type of music. What is generally understood as the quality of harmony is the product of a fusion of several, predetermined elements, and if that is traditional music, the aural space as Cage saw it is a space in which the listener proactively combines sounds to construct their own singular listening experience. Meaning that “the ears of the listeners” serve as the actors selecting the various elements given there.

**H:** That's right.

**M:** But generally, perhaps listeners don't think that kind of initiative is available to them?

**H:** I guess not.

**M:** I get the impression, for example, that we do not have enough of a music education to go to a concert and consciously listen to different parts of the music so our ears differentiate the sound of a certain type of instrument, or to be able to integrate the different sounds into a single, organic aural experience.

**H:** Once you start talking about music education, almost invariably it comes down to how you've studied Western music, which is the complete opposite of the music model Cage speaks of.

**M:** Describing it as music education is perhaps a little formal, but generally, in terms of how people approach listening to sounds, we have spent a long time being taught that the experience of listening to music, regardless of genre, is that of taking something offered to us that someone has put together well as a tune, and judging how "good" it is. So when sound comes along that has not been set, that remains in the form of materials, people may feel it to be "incomplete," and feel puzzled by that.

**H:** That's very true. People really are puzzled by that. Harking back to Asahi Art Square, if I may, my work there was incomplete when I named it "STUDIES." I was thinking about how to make a certain type of incomplete thing—there will be blanks, obviously it will have blank spaces because it is not finished—and I mean thinking about how to use those blanks. The space is no longer used, so even if I were to describe the site it wouldn't really convey what I mean, but let's imagine. You can see the space from above. The floor above is glassed in, and you can watch people moving about. When Fumihiko Sumitomo, director of Arts Maebashi, came to visit, he commented that it was the audience that was doing the study here. There are various ways of viewing, but generally when the audience comes to see a work, they don't want to be involved in any study. They want to see a completed thing and make up their minds about it accordingly. I was also asked why those viewing the work should be obliged to think about it; which in turn gave me plenty

of food for thought.

**M:** At Asahi Art Square I think people were offered a new perspective on "soundlike things," in the form of giving them the chance to experience as sound things people are not normally conscious of as being sound.

**H:** Yes, that's right.

**M:** I mentioned earlier how if you take a particular approach to editing video, it can seem musical, and I suppose the same can be said for people's movements. The spectator can actually try moving, and sense within themselves—I guess to call it a musicality of sorts would be a little odd—an organic flow, perhaps. Or another person could see that, and perceive it as a kind of music. Interpreting actions such as this as "music" is I suspect something else you were aiming for with your exhibits at Asahi Art Square. Any thoughts on that?

**H:** Hmm, yes. If I were to start talking about the music of actions, we'd be here all day. Do you mind if we move on to something else?

There is video of an installation view from a show in New York. I'd like to show that.

Video plays





*Compositions*  
Pioneer Works 2018

**H:** The venue, a place called Pioneer Works, is in an area of Brooklyn known as Red Hook, and could be described as a multipurpose art space. There are instructions on the wall asking visitors to move bottles containing water to wherever they like, and so they do. By instructions I mean something akin to the sheet music of a score.

**M:** The avant-garde art movement known as Fluxus was active from the 1960s through to the early '80s, mainly in New York but extending to Europe and Japan as well, and "instructions" were a method of making art that emerged from the endeavors of Fluxus practitioners. This did literally involve instructions, i.e., the artist issuing short written directions for performing some action, in the vein of "water" or "touch," which each spectator would interpret in his or her own way and use to perform assorted actions, in a method designed to encourage audience participation in a performance. It was used most in the early days of Fluxus, around 1961–62. Yoko Ono's book *Grapefruit*

published in 1964 is a collection of instructions written by her.

In 1991 an artist, Félix González-Torres held an exhibition in which candy equivalent to the combined weight of him and his deceased lover was placed in the gallery, with visitors to the gallery invited to take home a piece. The person actually issuing the instructions, in this case a gallery staff member, was free to determine the type of candy, and the mode of its display. The artist's only "instruction" was that candy weighing the same as him and his beloved be installed in the gallery. Which gives the audience a lot of freedom, doesn't it?

**H:** While we're talking about Torres, I'll mention that actually, the amount of water here is equivalent to my weight. Part of that is for the same reason as Torres, but also, water evaporates. As time passes, the volume reduces. I thought well, in the end, sound is invisible, and so is that evaporating water. It just naturally diminishes, becomes part of the air. Which struck me as wonderfully poetic, and a live performance seemed the best way to proceed. Poetic of course means having an element of poetry, and when I say live, I mean in the sense of the immediacy of an exhibition per se, and also that sound, I think you can hear it as we are speaking now, that clinking tone. I love that sound, the way it reverberates.

**M:** How is that sound made?

**H:** It's just what you get when you move wine bottles.

**M:** So the sound is produced by the moving.

**H:** Like this (looking at video).





*Compositions*  
Pioneer Works 2018

**M:** They make a sound because they touch.

**H:** Ultimately, they make a sound when moved, so you could simply put this down to randomness, but obviously randomness is guaranteed, so here for me randomness is not the theme; I simply adore that sound.

**M:** The sound also differs according to how much water remains in the bottle.

**H:** Indeed.

**M:** And which parts of the bottles collide. So where a composer would calculate, this part is high, this part goes slowly, it's left to the random effects born out of the unique nature of the physical conditions such as posture and speed, when the person performs the action.

**H:** The pitch changes when the volume of water is increased or reduced, to the extent that a musician looked at it and wondered, if you hit this with sticks, would it sound like a glockenspiel?

**M:** But I imagine that hitting something to make a sound like a glockenspiel was beside the point here.

**H:** Absolutely. Plus I was conscious of offering a work that allowed the audience to configure the gallery space freely, in this case by moving bottles.

**M:** Assuming it was a performance of the sort where actions with a clear purpose or result

are deemed the norm, the act of moving or switching around objects becomes very conventional. Meaning that the changes in sound engendered by those “nothing special” actions are important.

**H:** Yes. In the end, there was a single sound in the space. The same goes for the show at the Shiseido Gallery; when two sounds occur simultaneously, basically that forms a composition. The instant two sounds are produced, it becomes music, bizarre though that may seem. This work involved just the simple act of moving bottles, but what I'm saying is that for me, just two of those clinking sounds together sounds like the richest of compositions. It reinforces the idea that this is in fact a musical work.

**M:** It really is.

**H:** I suspect this is precisely what we mean by music being action, by musicking.

**M:** I agree. I wonder if this is also closely connected to the concretist approach pursued by artists in the 1960s. Concretism is an approach that, rather than maintaining a hierarchical relationship between everyday sounds and composed sounds, values the originality of sounds without manmade interference. It is based on the idea that by opening our hearts and minds to the unintentional sounds surrounding us, just as Cage noticed in his “anechoic chamber experience” at Harvard University, we can enjoy a richer aural experience. Fluxus leader George Macunias, who learned of this idea from Cage, attempted to apply it to the understanding of art as a whole. According to him, modern western works of art have controlled various elements, including nature, through human thought, packaging them into collated forms such as pictures or stories to deliver to audiences; but the new art would wherever possible avoid intention or subjectivity on the part of the maker, instead emphasizing the likes of random occurrences, and process. In other words, he was saying that in the new music, it would be a case of hitting something and having it make just the sound of being hit, making sounds that convey directly the unique quality

of what is occurring now; and in painting, move preferably in the direction of conveying the strength of an action, or the process. If that directionality was “concretism,” to put such an approach into action it was vital for the artist to create conditions in which they would be able to forget their own intentions and subjective view. The best-known example of a method made for intentionally suppressing subjectivity is Cage’s chance operations. Macunias called his own method for forgetting subjectivity his “automatic machine.”

This instruction of yours, in which spectators move water set up by you, though rather too poetic to be described as a “device,” can perhaps be thought of as a kind of “automatic machine” in which rather than the composer him or herself intentionally composing, music is obtained as a result of the physical actions of the audience, moving objects.

**H:** I see on the handout for the show there is something marked “Upon the Occasion of ~ing.” Allow me to read it to everyone.

I wrote, “Sounds come into being, only to disappear in an instant. All endeavors that we call ‘music’ arise, perhaps, from human beings’ desire to apprehend these sounds before they disappear. Music is born out of our everyday lives, originating in the individual, ultimately returning to the individual. All human beings on Earth, regardless of the society or community to which they belong, are implicated in myriad relationships: not just with other human beings, but with the non-human too. Recognizing both human and non-human activities, conscious of the interlacing relationships that exist between them, may well be the key to broadening the scope of our coexistence. Many phenomena in our ecosystem that overwhelm our everyday logic—climate change, earthquakes, radiation—seem to us both temporally and spatially unfathomable. The time and space contained in this exhibition, ~ing, belong to you. You may find the ever-changing environment hazy, indefinite, indefinable: impossible to pin down with words. I hope the exhibition leads you to many such elusive

encounters.”

Listening to you talking now it struck me that these words will help us unravel a number of things. In the end I think only humans are aware of time and space, and we have to consider the relationship between space and time for things; animals and plants even.

**M:** Are you saying that things other than humans are incapable of creating time and space as the setting for proactive actions involving themselves as individuals?

**H:** That’s right. And in this work, in the end I have no autonomy, I guess you’d say, although that sounds a bit coerced.

**M:** What you mean is, it is not that your thoughts have already created the work, and you are just proffering the results of that to the audience.

**H:** That’s right. Ultimately I make it available, to a degree, and what actually comes out of that, is no longer to do with me.

**M:** I suppose you’d call that unconscious, or natural... Macunias also opined that if an iconographic stance was modern art, then now we ought to make art in which space and time are incorporated in us. But it was only natural for him to aim for that. The sound of rain falling, for example, is art, he said, as is the fluttering of a butterfly. That is a way of thinking that doesn’t discriminate between art and nature, art and the everyday. That’s also the stance you were aiming for with this exhibition, more clearly than you have ever done before.

If on the one hand we have this going back to nature, on the other hand we also need methods and tricks to indicate that even so, art is not the everyday as such, but something supported by the arousal of a special kind of sensation.

**H:** Absolutely.

**M:** I imagine that emerges from issuing instructions, installing works, in order to create the conditions for actions.

**H:** If I may apply this idea a little, my ideal musical performance or concert requires composer, performers, audience, and space to each be an independent sounding body. By which I mean, it's sufficient for all these to exist, but I think the job of a composer is to turn those sounding bodies into music by creating a certain, single order, in the sense of making sound.

In this latest exhibition too, there are lots of different things placed around, and listening to what you just said, it strikes me that perhaps creating a single order, the way one does that, does require something almost akin to a trick.

**M:** This order of which you speak, do we mean that it is not the kind of system generally spoken of that everyone has to follow, but a unification or totality created by the people on the spot using the materials they are given?

**H:** Yes, a totality.

**M:** Would it be correct to view your making and positioning of a device that suggests people to do it, that invites them in, as having made an environment for the audience to notice their own autonomy?

**H:** I suppose so, yes.

**M:** If I may move on to our third question?

**H:** Certainly, hopefully we are moving along at about the right pace. I guess we are.

**M:** My third question is: when you go to a place, research its special properties, and create an exhibit to suit, I assume you involve not only people that you usually deal with, but people with a connection to that place, in particular exhibition staff?

**H:** I do, yes.

**M:** Looking back at your previous conversations with other critics, I seem to remember one in particular, with Atsushi Sasaki, owner of your record label HEADZ, where Sasaki-san said that gathering together people and elements like that and

creating a setting for communication was something more typical of you than a lot of other creatives. What do you think about that? Or, I know in the case of Asahi Art Square, you ran various study groups, and looked carefully at the structure of the architecture, in order to familiarize yourself with the site; can you tell us a little about what it means to you to research things and people you don't know about? For instance, can you tell us what form your "STUDIES" of the Shiseido Gallery, and of Ginza as a site, took, and what kind of people you reached out to in the process of creating a space for communication?

**H:** Although the question is how to unravel all that.

**M:** An explanation of a specific work will do. Sasaki-san said this was a standout feature of your artistic character, so what are your thoughts on that?

**H:** Hmm, character you say...

**M:** I imagine he meant a talent he associated more with you than other people.

**H:** It's humans connecting with other humans, so I suppose the easiest example to use would be the ensemble. As I've said many times before, everyone in the ensemble, that is Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra, comes from a different background. What I mean by that is, a different musical background: there are people who are classically trained, and others who've played in bands. Their music is not something they can share.

**M:** Do you mean in terms of general musical knowledge, or skills?

**H:** Strictly speaking both, though obviously they try to understand the other person, how tough it is, and get closer to them. Get closer to each other's unfamiliar music, I mean. Perhaps they are incapable of understanding, but the act of getting closer is something they can do, being human, and I always try to make music centered on that growing familiarity.

That approach to making music is, in my case, just my character, I suppose. The reality is that when everyone grows closer, the result is a single piece of music, so I suppose I'm capitalizing on that increased familiarity. If you call that communication, I suspect those circumstances apply in all kinds of settings.

**M:** Indeed; for example, for the exhibition at Kobe Art Village you were asked to do the same as the one at Asahi Art Square, but when you actually went to the location in Kobe, you realized it would be better not to do the same there, so did something different. Can you tell us a little more about that? Say, how you capture the special qualities of a particular place?

**H:** It was as you say. I started with the idea of touring what I'd done at Asahi Art Square after carrying out the "STUDIES," and there's this art space by the name of Kobe Art Village Center. They don't only show art but have concerts, movies, and all sorts of amazing programs, and that was to be the venue for the exhibition. If I had taken what I did at Asahi to that place unmodified, it would have become a completely different piece of work.

**M:** Different because the location was different.



**H:** That's right.

**M:** So did you also think it would be better to come up with something else?

**H:** That's exactly what I thought. Something different, or rather, I thought I needed to make something new.

(Images screen from here)

This is what the work was like: here you can see the first floor of Kobe Art Village Center. I'll explain more later. There was something like this on the first floor, and this goes down underground. You get in the elevator and go down to the basement, and these are stairs. This is the basement. The work is positioned here, like this. This is fairly close to the Asahi Art Square exhibit. This is the type of work I was making.

As to what I was doing here, Kobe Art Village Center has a silkscreen workshop. Ah...silkscreen, I thought. I think you can tell from this, out the back is an open space. Not so much the back, as the back as entrance. Think of it as entering from the entrance, and my work being further in, at the back.

I spent a week in this open space making the work. What I was making was sound, using the piano, and all the other instruments at Kobe Art Village Center, which I brought in there. What kind of sound? It was all a score

*soundlike 2*

Kobe Art Village Center 2013

the speaker, and the music I made played out of this, in an installation I did while looking at the graphic score I had made.

Here we have glass, and people pass by. For example, as you see here, the blue and yellow are instructions to use two instruments, and this is random, this shows the intensity of the sound. I left it recording, and did it using the piano, and did stuff like perform sounds repeatedly in the moments people passed by. It was a score: I recorded at the same time as the score to make the work.



**M:** Did you have help from staff to do the score?

**H:** I did. It was the people from Kobe Art Village Center who worked with me on the score to start with, and they actually performed at the same time, under my direction. So I had the staff performing as well.



*graphic score 2013*

**M:** Can you first of all explain your definition of “score” a little more?

**H:** The term score refers to the sheet music, I suppose you could call it. You have what is known as staff notation, but in the 1950s a composer by the name of Morton Feldman, among others, invented a new kind of musical notation...

In simple terms, I suppose you could describe it as the idea of how to incorporate randomness and uncertainty in what was written in staff notation, how to see if even such underlying, existing concepts can be destroyed with music.

**M:** That’s exactly right. A score is usually written in notes, but Cage for example tried using a map of Henry David Thoreau’s book *Walden*, out of empathy with the philosopher and writer’s account of his time there. The notation for Cage’s performances can resemble drawing-like symbols. What you came up with on that occasion was something akin to those performance scores,

using diagrams to show sounds.

**H:** Yes. To some extent the medium for making the sound (eg the musical instrument) is decided in advance, and you have to fit in with that, so it’s like a track for actions, directions for making people move.

**M:** So there is something already complete, and the decision to add oneself to that cannot be made arbitrarily; one must follow rules to forget one’s own thoughts and self-awareness, to make it possible to create sound.

**H:** Meaning there is a blank that is left up to the performer.

**M:** Yes, that’s it. The score being in diagrams gives the freedom to generate those blank spaces.

**H:** That’s correct.

I’m not sure if “those days” is the right expression, but the way of using graphic notation when Cage was doing it, for example, and the philosophy behind my use of graphic notation are inherently totally different, in my view. I’ve never even remotely done it because I wanted to do it like Cage, and even if I used the same thing as he did in those days, I’m confident my output would be different, and in fact, think it is. I am making a “those days” of my own with the understanding that I am not simply tracing history, but doing something completely different.

**M:** There are a lot of new, ingenious aspects to this exhibition at the Shiseido Gallery. I mentioned earlier that the aim of Fluxus was to move away from the hierarchy of art versus nature and explore ways to bring art closer to nature, and I see in the text you have written for this exhibition something similar, stated in more contemporary terms. In the days of Fluxus, the notion of art for art’s sake had been dominant for a very long time, which is perhaps why the Fluxus artists, as a counter to that, sought to return to nature through radical actions, but in your case, there is a long history of composers contemplating how the avant-garde music that emerged from that

time on would be accepted in human culture and social contexts.

Seeing this exhibition I was surprised by how much more concerned than before you are with things like plants and water. Moisture tends to remind us of weather, and it felt as if you were taking great pains to explore how things in nature, including natural phenomena, and the human body, engage with each other, and in particular how humans and other entities meet, mix and connect through the sensation of sound. Would you tell us a little about this latest exhibition?

**H:** Yes, why not. The exhibition I spoke of earlier, that involved moving bottles of water around, was titled “compositions,” and was staged in locations such as Aomori, Tokyo and Beijing before heading to New York, where it ran up to April 8. The exhibition at Shiseido Gallery was from April 6, so there was a slight overlap. These circumstances were another reason why I had been considering making something new since Toyoda-san of the Shiseido Gallery approached me.

I’d been brainstorming, I guess you’d say, for ages; thinking about concepts. To put it plainly, if I may, I’d been doing what I do now for eleven years, and the more I did, the more keenly I felt that the society in which we live was not getting any better.

The past two or three years I’ve had a lot of opportunities to visit New York, and done a lot of moving around. That shifting about has allowed me to view things with a kind of objectivity, and be more open in my ideas for tackling new challenges, but I thought from the start that I needed to rethink my very practice, this kind of thing, including the matters that had influenced my activities to date. So each of the works in this exhibition has a reference, I suppose you’d call it, a past work, not the same but a reference, my thought being that perhaps I could come up with some new perspectives on those works. I was hoping this exhibition would perhaps offer a few new insights for the future from the present, via the act of revisiting the past in this way.

This leads on to discussion of things like relational qualities and environment, and

because this exhibition is titled “~ ing” to start with, there is this void, on both sides of the “~.” Room for words to go in. Something-or-other to something-or-other. That something-or-other to something-or-other itself, in my view, demonstrates that relationship. It could be things and people, myself and others, hearing and vision, but because it is “ing” obviously it could be the progressive form, or you could insert “be” and make it being, as in human being. Add “th” and you have thing. Thus my hope was that using a symbol like this, would give a lot of scope in meaning.

Amid all this rethinking of things, due to specific problems right now such as climate change, or in Japan, radiation in Fukushima, we have lost the ability to imagine the future. But it strikes me that the future is not something we’ve ever been able to imagine. By which I mean, there are similarities between the acts of revisiting the past and imagining the future. Meaning that handling now, the present day, with care, amounts to the same.

I suspect that valuing the here and now is very close to feeling deeply this time we grasp right now, to expanding our sensibilities as we go along; in other words, time passes, so environments also change with that passage of time. Through my works I create environments for people to be not so much conscious of, as sense, those changes, even a little; where they can embrace them as sensations.

**M:** It strikes me you have used that as a blueprint and developed assorted projects accordingly. In the exhibition at Shiseido Gallery, the floor is packed with gold-colored scraps which at first glance look like debris, but which when someone walks on them, make sounds as they move against each other. The walls meanwhile have been turned into mirrors, their semi-opaque surfaces seeming wet with steam. Particularly on humid, cloudy days like today, they look even wetter, creating, with refractions, a lyrical scene reminiscent of people walking in rain. There is also a tree in the exhibition, that sways subtly due to the vibrations from a device you have set up to emit sound. Thus

despite the exhibition venue being a closed room, it is a space where one can sense a connection to organic things like water, trees, and weather. Into that, flow sounds you have spent a great deal of time collecting.

**H:** Yes, that's right.

**M:** It felt as if the world outside had been summoned into the enclosed space of the room, by weaving in sounds from other times, and fragments of actions being performed in the now; by having a living tree there, with a wind—if the vibration is seen as wind—shaking it, and mirrors covered in drops of water.

The material that looks like debris on the floor is partially dismantled musical instruments, isn't it?

**H:** Yes: to be precise, scraps left over from the manufacture of brass and other wind instruments.

**M:** With things like that placed there, one senses a connection to human living. When it came to doing an exhibition here in Ginza, I imagine you felt you had to work in elements like people passing by, the ambience of the site and so on. I also presume that in order to get YAMAHA to supply you with scrap, you had to negotiate with someone at Yamaha, so in incorporating social context including that task, you may have been thinking about Ginza as a place with a lot of human traffic.

**H:** Ah, YAMAHA. If I may start with YAMAHA; I actually started the creating when I returned to Japan in early March, going straight to YAMAHA, to their factory in Iwata, where they explained the process involved in making instruments, and then showed me their waste material.

**M:** Pieces of musical instrument are not the only things that would make a sound by touching when people move, so why did you choose instruments? I'm curious.

**H:** Ah, well you see, as I think is written on the handout for the exhibition, there's a series of mine called "Re-model," in which I

dismantle and then reconstruct objects to do with music and sound. Those reconstructions are referred to as re-models, and that act of re-modeling could also be viewed as a rejection of sorts of the Western view of musical instruments, of music. These works were made with the same idea as that underpinning Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra, that of assembling a different type of Western orchestra structure more suited to modern society. When the musical objects known as instruments are dismantled, making them no longer instruments, they quickly turn into objects, matter. I suppose you could almost call it cruel, this demotion from musical instrument to mere stuff, this verbal trick of logic.



*Re-model 2016*

**M:** Cruel I'd say. If equipped technologically as an instrument, a thing can make the sounds we expect it to.

**H:** Indeed.

**M:** If that is dismantled into parts, it is likely to be seen, like debris, as being of no use.

**H:** That's exactly the anthropocentric way of thinking I'm talking about.

**M:** Also very technology-centered.

**H:** Yes. When I actually went to the factory, various people there told me that making musical instruments in Japan was a high-end pursuit to begin with these days, the point being that it's about crafting by hand, a job for artisans, and that is a good thing. Whether it really is a good thing or not I don't know, but by all accounts, it is.

**M:** Well, it's good in its own way surely....

**H:** And after seeing that I saw the debris... which actually isn't debris is it, but scrap.

**M:** Sorry for just classing it as "debris."

**H:** Material that is used to make musical instruments sounds pretty good to start with. Any material, from East or West. Even a piano makes a good sound when struck with brushes like a percussion instrument.

**M:** Striking a piano with brushes...

**H:** For example, playing a piano on the inside. Like the reverberating sounds from a prepared piano. What I want to say is, even when it just becomes a thing, that in itself has nothing to do with sound. Even when a musical instrument is taken apart and reverts to its status as materials, I believe those materials make a lovely sound. I actually did one of my studies with those pieces of scrap. I did it right there, and I think I could describe them as being in robust health.

**H:** Meaning sound that was in great shape. The very concept of a musical instrument for the rational emission of sound is one of logos, of verbalizing. In turning from instrument to mere matter, it has dropped away from human sensation.

**M:** Slipped from the realm of cultural acts.

**H:** That's right. Reusing something, not infrastructure, but reusing something that has fallen. Not sure if reuse has the right feel...

**M:** Reuse is fine, I think. Reuse has been an important concept in contemporary art terms since the 2000s.

**H:** I suppose it has.

**M:** It's also similar to the idea of deconstruction; in art "reuse" means taking something used for something in a particular way, that has thus become commonplace or outdated, placing it in a different context or using it in a different way, and thus finding a new way of using, a new vitality, a new context for something ostensibly done with. Nor does "reuse" apply merely to objects. In contemporary art, the term "reuse" also refers to going to a town or neighborhood, listening to a forgotten story, and organizing an event that brings this story back to life. An example would be when the contemporary artist Michihiro Shimabuku went to a town in Wales and found that even though long ago, a dog had saved the lives of several people there, the locals were starting to forget the animal's heroic exploits. So he undertook a project that involved putting together a one-off event for dogs and their owners to have dogs swimming at the beach, in honor of that forgotten dog. [Shimabuku: Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition] Apparently lots of people took part. By doing this, he altered the local community's awareness not only of the legend in question, but of the place they lived in.

Just now you said that even when a musical instrument is taken apart and turned into just things, no longer producing the sounds you would expect from an instrument, those things have their own innate sound, and that moreover, is a good sound. You were attempting to create the conditions for playing that sound in a different form from an instrument, weren't you? That, I think, is "reuse" in the contemporary art sense.

Liberating sound from the functionally programmed realm of music, returning it to pure sound, and making a place to listen to that: all this is I think connected to the quote



from Cage in the first section of the handout. That quote concerned Cage's experience in the anechoic chamber at Harvard. Cage once went into a space set up technically in such a way that no sound would be audible, and heard two types of sound. When he later asked an engineer about the source of those sounds, he was told they were the sound of his own nervous system, and blood circulating. Cage concluded from this that no matter how much one tries to expel sound artificially, as there are sounds like this inside one's own body, it is impossible to shut out randomly occurring sounds. He also felt there was therefore no sense in the traditional categorizing of sounds written on sheet music as sound, and everything else as silence, or noise. He realized that the world is suffused with sound, so by simply opening our hearts and minds we can also sense, as a special experience, sounds conventionally deemed noise. From there arose Cage's appreciation of uncertainty; it also determined the direction of his music, which became to methodologize this appreciation. This is a famous story; perhaps so famous that it has been a little forgotten.

To me, your thought that as even the stuff that emerges when musical instruments are dismantled sounds good, why not create a new environment that will bring that good sound back to life, is a trial attempt at taking discarded sounds and working them into human experience again.

**H:** Furthermore, when the audience enters that place, perhaps you could call it the sensation of feet; it's very physical. They are using their bodies. Using their bodies to unite sound and body I suppose, there is a real sense of that physicality being worked in as a sound-generating phenomenon. Obviously that is intentional...

**M:** Is it a sense of that physical experience for example of one's feet hitting things, and the feel of a sound being produced swiftly shifting from touch to hearing to become one?

**H:** Yes. Sound is not something we just hear with our ears, so I believe it is something that various factors lead us to recognize as

sound, and thus I think that physical sensation of touch is also one feeling of sound, a feeling of sound that will likely be remembered.

**M:** Is that part of your idea of being soundlike?

**H:** Yes, though I refer to it as "something like sound."

**M:** Sound, and the various sensations surrounding it, something of that nature?

**H:** Cage's experience in the soundproof room also relates to the idea, I suspect, that inside us is a whole other cosmos, and sound goes on, music goes on, as long as we live, meaning we kind of store up memory and physical feelings inside us.

**M:** I agree. Cage's experience of the sounds he was hearing actually being the sounds of things flowing around his own body is important to you as well, I think. Which is why you take the view that it is not only our ears that sense sound, but the whole body, and that the body can serve as an instrument for making sound. Many contemporary musicians take Cage's ideas as the launchpad for their own, and those ideas of Cage's are so elementary they hardly need referencing here. In saying that, I think we can say they are to a degree linked to the origins of your own ideas?

**H:** I don't know if this is a fitting example, but take today's pop music for instance, take the Beatles: their music is made up of just four instrumental parts: drums, guitar, bass and vocals. The Beatles and Cage rank similarly in musical terms for me, though the reason for that requires a little explaining...

I think you can go at this from a number of directions. I'm saying they're the same in that both created our modern perceptions of music. Not that their music is similar, but that they were similar in the sense of being influential.

**M:** The more rigorous attitude to sound in Cage's day, and your approach that

endeavors to incorporate social context, including the visual, could just be described as the difference between modern and post-modern, but it does seem to reflect the complexity of the period that followed.

When I was given the opportunity to chat with you, I was asked to do so in the context of what is always taught at school—Cage, Fluxus etc.—but it struck me that this wouldn't entirely mesh with your current approach. What was rediscovered in the 1960s was the power of unprocessed sound per se. Fluxus and so on anticipated that sound itself would lead humans back to a natural world hitherto disrupted by the format of civilization versus nature, and to do so they had no choice but to adopt an “anti-art” stance that rejected professional music and art, instead aiming for the natural.

However, since the 1970s I think effort has been made to open up various paths for returning the avant-garde music, or contemporary music, ushered in in that form, to the everyday lives of living people.

As someone composing and working in the world post that of the 1970s, I think you have the more human viewpoint of a person who has come in fresh; a way of engaging with music that is not necessarily anti-art. Which also brings me to the last of my questions. It's something evident also in the way you decline to reject the concert as a form, typified in the activities of Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra. That is to say, you have not abandoned the question of how to deliver your music to an audience. And also, in your musical activities, there is a sense that your heart is open to symbiosis with nature, and to the everyday joy that people take in the subtle changes that occur in the natural world and day-to-day living; the crisp air of morning, evening light, the sound of an insect's wings.

Although some might fail to see the connection between this sort of thing, and contemporary art. In anticipation of our talk today I listened to the tracks on Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra CD *Time plays and so we do* ~ that you gave to me. Having done so, it seems to me that in your musical realm you may have taken on board avant-garde experimentation as a basis for

how you engage with sound, but have not moved that far toward the reverence for the “mechanical” adopted by the avant-garde in its effort to evade the subjective; instead you have actively sought to embrace the lyrical and emotional, rather than excising it. Your tunes possess a rich emotional realm restored through human sensation, a sense, one could say, of the poetic being precious to you. Would you like to comment on that? By all means actually play some of the music for us if you can.

**H:** I think I can manage that (laughs).

(Plays *ONEMAN* by Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra)

**M:** Ideally it would be good to read all those lyrics, actually.

**H:** Indeed.

**M:** This music is probably a difficult world for anyone very familiar with contemporary music to recognize. I first heard this sound source in 2013 when asked to contribute to the catalog for your exhibition at Asahi Art Square, and felt it would be hard to discuss in the context of the contemporary art I knew. At the time, I happened to be studying the avant-garde methodologies of the '60s, such as Fluxus, and to me there seemed to be little crossover between the austerity of avant-garde methods, and the generous inclusiveness of your music.

Having now done more research on avant-garde methodologies, I sense a very human world to take on board anew. As you build your career as a contemporary artist, I suspect that human aspect will become harder to acknowledge publicly, so perhaps this would be a good opportunity to discuss the significance of those human, lyrical aspects.

So let us read a little. Today I have also brought along a poem by Shuntaro Tanikawa, from *Kiku to kikoeru – on Listening*, his collection of poems on the subject of music. The words you wrote, with no knowledge at all of Tanikawa's poems, resonate superbly in my view with his thoughts on music, on the experiences of “listening” and “hearing,”

flowing through his poems.

**H:** I see. You mean the track I played just now, right? “Amid the light we turn to face in unison / Who said let’s go together? / Amid the urgent knocking / I ask, bundle the time of my birth / Amid the light we turn to face in unison / Gauging the all and only the same / Amid the urgent knocking / I ask, bundle the time of my birth / Ask, bundle time / If I start to count a moment / Amid a single blink of the eye / Who said let’s go together? / Just why is it / There is a mono noise / That changes to stereo / Like playing monopoly / This space between everyone and us / Is in unison / Beyond the universe / Divide 1 by 1 and the meaning will appear here / I thought I saw something / Thought I saw something / Let’s go while we still can / Ask, bundle time / Making light turn back / I am one man and yet not one man

**M:** I get the feeling these lyrics are connected to the “~ing” idea of this exhibition.

**H:** It projects my awareness of issues at the time I was writing that song. It was co-written with Orchestra members Misato Kinoshita and Roy Tamaki. Put simply, it was a plea to just acknowledge diversity. Although that would seem rather obvious. I confess to a sneaking admiration for that which is strong. By strong I mean here for example the Western. In sturdily constructed systems—whether painting, or sculpture, or movies or music—I sense something underneath that we just don’t possess, that fascinates me. But when I attempt to make that fascinating or attractive thing myself, it ends up being somehow controlling. And so the diversity is lost.

Which is why when I put together this ensemble, I knew I had to acknowledge everyone, that is, the existence of the orchestra members, and the people who listen to the music. By acknowledging I mean not making statements from my own, dominant viewpoint, but affirming as we go along. And that applied across the whole of this album.

**M:** The same goes for the last song, doesn’t

it.

**H:** The last song (Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra *Hello Everything*) is definitely like that.

**H:** “Us bundling endless words flowing forgetting recalling / Us piling endless gestures on one another like air flowing through all / Bright morning-sun light through a chink in the curtains / Open the window, outside air flows in, found it, a nearby tree / Mid afternoon, burgeoning green, Shapes visible, in the shadows / A couple sit barefoot on a bench under the tree, adorable / Between branches, sunset, color changing slowly / A bird lands, Eats a berry from the tree, Tasty / Well... white breath, dissolves in the shadows / When dark falls, I grow sleepy, Goodnight, See you tomorrow”

**M:** Thank you. The word “bundle” appears in both the first and last track, returning to where you began, the same thought first and last.

**H:** That’s right. I wrote the lyrics for this one again with Roy Tamaki. The rap is a favorite too.

**M:** When I was given this opportunity to speak with you, and saw the exhibition at the gallery on the opening day, a member of staff told me that in this show, you were intensely conscious of the different experiences of “listening” and “hearing,” and that the exhibition was configured in a way that would allow visitors to “listen,” that is, be conscious of the experience of listening to music. But what I sensed when I stood in the gallery was more like “hearing” sound. Various sounds came from all directions, not intruding but creating the sensation of a single, organic space, despite there being so many different sounds. For me, it was not so much an experience that converged on me as actor, ie that of “listening”, as one of taking in what I heard, of “forgetting myself.” It struck me that the exhibition was also set up in a way open to such a visiting of sensations.

Not long ago there was an exhibition by Shuntaro Tanikawa at the Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (January 13–March 25, 2018).

That was a wonderful show, and the language of Tanikawa's recent poetry is wonderful too. Not an extraneous word anywhere, and every word emerging from the truth of the author's own heart. The poetry was straightforward yet true, as if the length of each line matched the power and meaning of the words. I found a poem like that in *On Listening*, and would like to read it.

Between this poem, and the lyrics you just read for us, I sense a kind of spiritual resonance.

Tanikawa Shuntaro, "Like Music."

I want to be like music / To navigate with ease / The labyrinth from body to heart, like music / To lead the heart to calmness / While arousing the body, like music / To slip away from time, like music / Out into vast sunlit fields / And where winged and feathered creatures are dancing in the sky / Creatures with legs galore crawling on the earth / If the distant peaks are too dazzling / Let me linger like a mysterious mist / A single tear sitting on my lashes / Like music / Let me be like music / I want to hold this mortal body in my arms / And release my heart into the skies, like music / I want to be like music. (i)

For Tanikawa, music counters silence. That silence is both the source of life, and exceedingly close to death, the embodiment of the non-human world. Complete in itself, it has no need for human words. Which is why humans may gain strength from it, be born from it, yet in order to prove that "I am here and I am alive," they have to emit words. Tanikawa has grasped that music is the ultimate form of speech.

It seems to me that music's ability to "navigate with ease the labyrinth from body to heart" as Tanikawa writes, is not entirely unrelated to what you were talking about before; the idea that sensing sound is not just about hearing, but closely related to human physical sensations.

Furthermore, in the afterword of his book, Tanikawa says, "I believe an emotion it would be fair to describe as poetic sentiment is aroused in us by the various sounds of nature: the sound of a breeze sighing in

pine trees, of the wind itself, for example. In contrast to such sounds as these that come to us, we listen to man-made music with our hearts, via our ears. Yet those two modes of hearing are not inherently distinguishable. Initially I thought of the title of this book in terms of the difference between listening and hearing. But eventually I came to think that if we concentrate hard enough on listening, we may notice the audible things that lie hidden far below."(ii)

**H:** It's a question of hearing and listening, of collecting sound. It's my lot to be involved in music, and though in Japanese the words for hear and listen are homophones, their meaning is totally different. It's not as if any answer exists, and my work is not an attempt to search for an answer. So I do my thing in the hope that there will be lots of flashes of inspiration, that I'll become aware of new things, I suppose. Natural sounds that one hears... yes, I know what he means.

**M:** It's not just physical sounds being heard, but "the audible hidden far below," so I imagine to listen to something, you have to be open to it in your heart. Things that become audible when you are trying hard to listen are "things outside of consciousness" I guess.

Many of your devices, because they employ electronic sound, are designed not to be audible unless one listens carefully. In the work *sounds will spin* you introduced earlier, was there plastic in the glass tubes?

**M:** That was glass as well.

**M:** There are pieces inside, and when the device spins, those pieces come into contact with each other in various ways and make sounds; in these circumstances, I imagine you have to concentrate quite hard to hear. On the other hand, in the work *Heart of Handrail*, there is a tiny speaker on the handrail that produces sound, and that sound cannot be heard without crouching right up close to the rail. Which inevitably turns the spectator into a performer. Such actions really are acts of "listening," and the works devices for "listening." I think they are about picking out various sounds, and being



conscious of the self as the receiver integrating these, that is, as the listening actor. With repeated training of this sort, perhaps one becomes more attuned to what is heard.

**H:** I guess so. Obviously it's natural you also become more attuned to hearing things. Apart from that, in my view there is a consciousness on top of sensation, and consciousness is very human, isn't it? I see it as something humans are capable of, it's just that environments with sound have entities other than humans living there, existing there, so to recognize the presence of those things one has to liberate one's consciousness, or they will not be audible, not in a tautological sense of recognizing the existence of a being, but of understanding the environment. Or rather than understanding the environment, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, being aware of oneself as one entity in the environment.

**M:** A kind of awakening, perhaps. Earlier you were talking about diversity, and mentioned that when you said, when launching Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra, that diversity would be important, people just took that for granted. But to you though, would it be fair to say diversity refers to the way there are all kinds of living things, and all kinds of sounds, and even if something is of no benefit or significance to humans, acknowledging that each exists in its own unique form?

**H:** I suppose so. You could call that diversity, and it very much the case for the text in this "Upon the Occasion of ~ing."

**M:** So we return to that?

**H:** To not only the human.

**M:** Engaging with the non-human has hidden potential doesn't it; even with objects, I suppose, like those pieces of musical instrument mentioned earlier.

**H:** That's right. Hopefully it prompts people to look at things afresh, do some rethinking.

**M:** Amid modern rationality, people tend to only be able to form connections with things that are of use to humans, but what you are saying is, that is not the case.

**H:** Meaning taking a fresh look at that kind of thing.

**M:** Indeed. Thank you very much.  
Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

**H:** Partly I guess because I tend to come up with lyrics and so on largely unconsciously, I was surprised myself to find how much commonality there is between this type of exhibition I do, how I approach my works, and even my lyrics.

**M:** I am certainly of the opinion that what you do with Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra, and what you do in the way of exhibitions and so on as a contemporary artist, should not be split between educating the public, and avant-garde expression.

**H:** Thank you.

**M:** Hasunuma-san, thank you from us to you.

**H:** And thank you, Matsui-san.

**T:** We have time for a couple of questions, if anyone has any?

**Question** Thank you for taking the time to be with us today. You spoke earlier of how several years ago when you were doing a show, you felt that no matter how much you did, the world didn't seem to get any better, but how have you felt about that more recently, as you pursue your activities? Can you tell us a little more specifically what made you think that all those years ago?

**H:** I started making works in 2006 or 2007, then as you know in 2011 there was the big quake and tsunami, and now we are seven years on from that. It just strikes me that with time passing to a degree since that event, it is strange that as we, naturally enough, carry on with our day-to-day lives, we have simply returned to how it was before the disaster; I

have this strong sense that even though perhaps, we could have actually become a people able to take the initiative and show other countries how to make changes, we've just reverted to the status quo. For that reason, when I was making this kind of album (Shuta Hasunuma Philharmonic Orchestra *Time plays – and so do we.*), I wanted to imbue it with the idea that unless something is listened to, it's pointless, incorporating that meaning in a way. In other words, to me music is not music just by virtue of being made; it only becomes music when people listen to it.

I loosely packed that album with a sense of this, and that awareness, and released it in 2014, but it's now we need to be conveying that message even more directly.

What I mean, and this might not be the proper way to say it, is that I perceive this to be the time not for hair-splitting argument, but for straight talking, or the message will not get through. It's similar to what I said before about music not being music unless it's listened to, and on many occasions, it felt to me like, if something was not getting through to people directly, that way of thinking did not even exist to start with. Which is why I think, in this latest exhibition also, I suppose what you could call the main work—the one made using musical instrument scraps—takes the connection between object/matter and instrument, self and others, and turns it fairly simply into a artwork, with the intention of ensuring that the concept of asking people to rethink their ideas about relationships is conveyed quite directly. So it's not as if something specific, some eureka moment, occurred for me at a particular point; more a powerful sense that things have just changed with the passing of time.

**Question 2** You mentioned the Tohoku quake disaster, and perhaps this is not the best way to put it, but when I saw those scraps of musical instrument, I found myself reminded of all the wreckage after the tsunami. But conversely it seemed to give that a new, animated quality, one could say; it felt like a remodeling, and it was this part of the show that moved me the most. Was this a conscious thing on your part?

**H:** I had no intention at all of creating debris, but I do think that when such an event (a disaster or incident in society) occurs, music is one of the media capable of swiftly giving it tangible form, expressing it. To convey a message directly, all you need is a song and a guitar. But I was unable to do so immediately. I found I couldn't convert thoughts into action. Obviously I have to acknowledge that this was the biggest shock to date on my personal timeline, and that my capabilities, as an artist, are limited; I also felt utterly powerless. In my works it is difficult to insert directly anything social, any political message. I feel that keenly myself, and made that work not so much as debris, as with a sensation of a failure of what could have been music to become music, the scattered remains of what remains of human ego shattered, so I think that when people see it, they will imagine debris or rubble; it does have that concept. So I suppose it is akin to a situation in which something made by humans has been dismantled and left there. I believe everyone will have different ways of engaging with the works, and different perceptions, which to me seems a good thing, and I hope those differences persist. Not much of an answer, I'm afraid.

**Question 2** Thank you.

**M:** I think you are seeing the same thing, just describing it differently. If, just as Hasunuma-san has picked up on the possibility of liberating latent sound in that no longer used as music instruments, the person who saw the fragments in terms of a connection to the earthquake saw people walking, making sound, amid a scene in which everything seemed to be destroyed, and sensed a rebirth, I thought there was a connection between the possibilities identified by both.

**H:** Thank you.

**M:** Thank you to our audience for listening this evening.

**T:** Thank you. Today I think a few things have been put into words by our guests, and some things that were a little hazy, made clearer. Our thanks to Hasunuma-san and Matsui-san

for their time.

### Translation by Pamela Miki

(i) Shuntaro Tanikawa, "Like music" from *Kiku to kikoeru* (On Listening) (Sogensha, 2018), p.46.

(ii) Shuntaro Tanikawa, "Afterword" from *Kiku to kikoeru*, pp.124, 125.

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