Translated Source Document
Composer–Performer–Audience Project (2017)

1. Editorial note:

This document is a translated version of a Hebrew project proposal written in 2017. The translation preserves the original structure and wording as closely as possible. Non-conceptual sections (such as CVs and budget details) have been omitted. Page references to the original Hebrew document are indicated where relevant.

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2. Main Proposal (pp. 1–2)

[Original Hebrew: pp. 1–2]

Composer – Performer – Audience Project

The aim of this project is to enable a number of composers to focus their efforts and talents on composing works for solo saxophone. Several of these works will be brought together into a concert, to be performed live and professionally recorded as a CD. The recording and the works themselves will form a cultural product rooted in the local context. Bringing these works together into a coherent concert program and producing them as a recording will make it possible to present the project in festivals, masterclasses, and lectures, locally and internationally, while the performances will promote both the works and their creators.

Background

Both composers and performers are typically subject to time constraints and "economic" limitations that restrict the scope of their work, the level of difficulty, the reliability of performance, and, above all, push those involved into standardized patterns that do not genuinely open space for discovery or learning.

The intention of this project—through the time it allocates, the planning, the high ambitions, and the dedication it requires—is to create a meaningful and diverse contribution to the landscape of Israeli composition. Within this framework, both sides will benefit from sustained mutual enrichment and from an intimate working process that allows for deep and significant results with long-term relevance.

The hope is that through joint effort and initiative, we can move our cultural practice toward meaningful achievements—not merely as something to take pride in retrospect, but as an act of

planting a fruit-bearing tree, which will yield good fruit, and in turn grow into a tree that will produce even richer fruit in the future.

Underlying Values

What drives this project is a set of values that I hold and wish to affirm and bring into reality, even if that reality does not resemble my personal ideal.

In my view, there is little meaning in a composer sitting alone at home inventing the next musical language; nor is it meaningful for a performer to remain in the studio, playing for themselves or recording their own performances; and equally, for a listener to remain isolated within their headphones.

Rather, I believe that music is a unifying and enabling component of a shared, multi-participant ritual in which all participants invest their time, energy, and resources toward a common event.

This is not an entertainment event, though it does not exclude humor or playfulness, but its goal is not to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Nor is it an economic enterprise; rather, it resembles somewhat akin to a communal institution whose purpose is to sustain itself while faithfully serving its community—no more than that.

In my view, cultural practice gains meaning only when understood as an event of collective and spiritual significance—one that is genuinely important to all its participants. Only in this form is it worthy of collective support.

It is one of the tools through which a community can improve its quality of life by engaging with what elevates the spirit, and by creating an event that creates a community that, in turn, creates further events—momentarily releasing the individual from the condition of isolated, screen-mediated existence that has become increasingly dominant in recent years.

Timeline [p.2]

1. Establishing connections with participating composers will be completed by the end of September 2017 – successfully completed.
2. October 2017 – June 2018: composition of the works.
3. July–August 2018: rehearsals.
4. August 2018: recording sessions in the studio.
5. October 2018 (one year after the project's initiation): the concert and recordings will be made available to the public, including a first public performance, ideally במסגרת חג המוסיקה הישראלי (Israeli Music Festival).
6. From 2019 onwards: performances of the works in Israel and abroad.

Working Process [p.2]

The core of the process lies in the “laboratory” meetings. These begin in August 2018 with the composers with whom collaboration has been established and who have expressed interest in advancing the project.

The meetings take place in private homes and teaching studios in order to reduce production costs, though some sessions requiring studio facilities or other resources are also included in the budget.

Jonathan serves as the project coordinator and remains in continuous communication with the composers. Tuesdays are fully dedicated to these laboratory meetings, and occasionally Fridays as well. Meetings are one-on-one and typically last several hours.

Time is allocated among the composers according to evolving needs, with the intention that every question—whether technical or related to recordings that may require several hours of work—receives a timely response. Additional working hours, particularly in the mornings, are dedicated to supporting this process.

About the Artist [p.2]

Jonathan Chazan is a saxophonist, born in Buenos Aires in 1983 and immigrated to Israel in 1989. He studied with Amiram Granot, Prof. Gersh Geller, Gan Lev, and Pierre-Stéphane Meugé. He was awarded America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarships in 2005–2006 and 2007–2008 with distinction.

He graduated with distinction from the Jerusalem Academy High School for Music and Dance, served as an outstanding musician in the Israel Defense Forces Orchestra, completed a Bachelor’s degree in performance at the Lausanne Conservatory, and a Master’s degree in wind instrument pedagogy at Tel Aviv University.

He teaches saxophone, ensembles, and theory at the Stricker and Jaffa Conservatories. He is a member of the Tel Aviv Saxophone Quartet, which performed at the 2006 World Saxophone Congress and on leading stages in Israel.

He has performed as a soloist and chamber musician, including appearances at the Synesthesia Festival (2010) and the Warsaw Autumn Festival (2010) with Ensemble Nikel. He has performed with major Israeli orchestras, including the Israel Philharmonic, Jerusalem Symphony, Rishon LeZion Symphony, the Israeli Opera Orchestra, and the Haifa Symphony, as well as with contemporary ensembles such as Musica Nova and the 21st Century Ensemble.

His work focuses on the performance of contemporary and early music, improvisation, and the creation of original arrangements from various periods and instrumental contexts, alongside continuous and intensive collaboration with numerous composers in the creation of new works.

3. Composer Contributions

3.1 Shay Cohen (p.5)

3.2 Gil Dori (pp.6–8)

3.3 Ofir Ilzetzki (p.14)

3.4 Igal Myrtenbaum (p.17)

Creation for Saxophone Solo and Electronics in Real Time

Dr. Shay Cohen, Jonathan Chazan
(20/9/17)

The proposed work will be written for solo saxophone, to be performed by Jonathan Chazan. Selected segments from the raw sonic material will undergo computer-based processing designed to respond in real time to the performed sound. The performance will employ high-quality amplification, spatial distribution of sound, and synchronization between the performer and computer in real time. Through the use of electronic techniques, the computerized system will analyze the performer's playing and present a sonic layer derived from selected musical segments.

The work will explore, on a sonic level, the interaction between the performer's physical gestures and the resulting sonic phenomena, including both soft and strong timbral textures.

On the formal level, the aim is to construct a musical narrative that determines what, how, and where a number of evolving states are realized over time, as well as what remains constant alongside what changes. This process will generate a continuous feedback loop between information ("input") and lack of information ("uncertainty"), in accordance with the changing findings that emerge during the performance.

Sincerely,
Dr. Shay Cohen

Composer: Gil Dori

The piece for saxophone and live electronics engages with the timbral spectrum of the instrument, insofar as it is expressed through different pitch registers or tonal colors. At the core of the work stands a spectral modulation technique, enabling transitions between different sonic qualities of the instrument through frequency regions within which the saxophone's spectrum is linked to pitch ranges.

We intend to further develop this technique through research that explores the analysis of the saxophone's timbral spectrum in various playing states. This research will also allow us to develop a quantitative and precise language for describing different playing modes.

The use of different spectral dimensions—acoustic and digital—forms an additional important characteristic of the work. In addition to the diverse expressive possibilities, the relationships between the acoustic spectrum produced by the saxophone itself and its placement within a broader digital spectral space are of particular interest. The position of the sound will change according to where we locate it within the acoustic spectrum, but also through computed transformations that map sonic events onto different spatial locations, thereby developing a spatial dimension.

The compositional approach will also include analyzing the spectrum of the performer's sound in real time. This will enable the creation of a new digital spectrum that serves as an extension of the original acoustic spectrum. The electronic layer will enrich the sonic material and expand its expressive possibilities. The conceptual basis of the work is inspired by a text by Jean-François Charles, which proposes learning the spectrum of sound through the exploration of different playing modes, thereby defining them from within the act of performance.

We also intend to bring into the process aspects of gestural expression, through which we will seek to develop the sonic and timbral dimension in a physical and embodied manner via the production of sound.

Work for Solo Saxophone

Ofir Ilzetzki

This work seeks to address, through the productive and challenging encounter between Jonathan and myself, a set of fundamental questions and difficulties that we both identify as central to contemporary art music in the 21st century. The historical process to which we refer carries within it an increasing tendency toward specialization. Despite the unprecedented accessibility of knowledge in our time—which allows for self-directed learning by almost anyone—there is a growing trend toward specification and professional specialization within the arts, which no longer enables the kind of holistic learning that existed in the past.

The modern professional musician is implicitly expected to strive for excellence within a narrow field, and therefore any deviation from one's domain of knowledge generates conflict. For example, the modern classical performer, unlike their counterpart in the 16th century, has not been trained in improvisation at all, and is therefore only rarely expected to engage in it. The modern composer, on the other hand, is required to be increasingly specific in their notation, leaving little room for ambiguity or misunderstanding within an ever-expanding system of concepts and details.

As a result, many composers produce musical texts that are brilliant yet sterile, leaving less and less space for the performer's interpretation. Conversely, the performer—whose technical and instrumental capabilities are developing at an accelerating pace—utilizes only a limited portion of their instrument's full range, since the modern composer is simply unable to keep up with the rapid development and constant turnover of knowledge.

Thus, paradoxically, in an era of accessible knowledge and global communication, artists find themselves increasingly isolated, due to an inability to bridge gaps within their field and/or to fully utilize the knowledge available to them. Ultimately, the result is that audiences are presented with listening experiences that feel "empty," increasingly perceived as elitist and addressed only to a supposedly "professional ear." Indeed, both the modern composer and performer appear more and more like scientific researchers than intuitive creators.

Therefore, the challenge—and the driving force behind this collaboration and the work that will emerge from it—lies in the experimental working process we propose: an encounter between performer and composer, composer and performer, that seeks to flatten the hierarchical relationship in which one dictates to the other. This process begins with an exchange of knowledge aimed at enriching each participant through exposure to the technical, scientific, and philosophical developments of the other.

From this shared learning, we will begin to focus—through a fully democratic approach—on the most compelling points of intersection between us. From this position, we aim to generate the new material we wish to present. We hope that this process will yield two main outcomes: first, a work that is genuinely collaborative—namely, not a piece written by a composer and performed by a performer, but a creation emerging from both agents together. In doing so, we hope to produce a new and organic listening experience, even while working within modernist idioms.

Second, we hope that the results of this collaboration will serve as a stimulus for future composers and performers who also recognize similar issues in their field, encouraging them to create comparable knowledge-exchange encounters and to share their outcomes with the wider community.

About the Project

Igal Myrtenbaum

My long-standing acquaintance with Jonathan Chazan has led to a meaningful artistic connection and continues to serve as a source of inspiration for my writing. His educational approach, which aspires to cultivate a generation of intelligent musicians unafraid of challenges, instills in me a sense of optimism.

Working with Jonathan on a piece for solo saxophone provides an excellent laboratory for exploring new possibilities, and I was therefore very pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this project.

One of the recurring topics in my conversations with Jonathan concerns the perception of time. Since the work is intended for a single instrument, I aim to engage in the creation of contrapuntal textures composed of layers that embody different temporal perceptions, akin to the polyphony found in single-voice works from the Baroque period.

In order to explore these different conceptions of time—understood not merely as rhythmic or metric frameworks, but as distinct temporal qualities—we intend to situate ourselves physically in environments that offer contrasting experiences of time (such as a desert, a ship, or a train station). Through this, we seek to translate these experiences into sound, forming the textures of the piece.