

FRANCESCA LA LOHÉ : Shaped by Words

<http://synradio.fr/francesca-le-lohe-shaped-by-words/>

A common thread throughout much of my work is the importance of text. Whether looking to literature as a source of inspiration, or incorporating words into a piece, engaging with text is often a key part of my creative process. For this playlist, I have selected work by myself, and by fellow composers/sound artists from the "Sound & Word Network", which has been shaped by text in one way or another.

(0:00) « THE 鍵 KEY » an Anglo-Japanese, immersive opera inspired by Junichiro Tanizaki's novel 'The Key' (1956), composed & directed by Francesca Le Lohé.

Instrumentation: 3 voices (sop, mez, ten/bar), dancer, shakuhachi, sho, Japanese perc, biwa, violin, cello, double bass, clarinet.

The libretto is a mix of English and Japanese, including some excerpts from the original novel. I constructed the libretto myself, which was the first time for me to create text for use in my compositional work. More about the opera here: www.thekeyopera.com

Here, I present excerpts from recordings made at the 2019 Tokyo performances (Denchu Hirakushi House and Atelier, May 2019) and 2019 London performances (10 Tollgate Drive, Tête-à-Tête: The Opera Festival, August 2019).

(07:23) « After 9-5 » for sho (Japanese mouth organ) & electronics (2020-2021). Music: Francesca Le Lohé / Words: Charlotte Wührer *previously unreleased.

My most recent work has been created through an ongoing exchange with Berlin-based writer and co-founder of the "Sound & Word Network", Charlotte Wührer. The exchange began when I composed a new short work for solo sho in response to Charlotte's fiction work "Nine-to-Five". Charlotte then wrote new text in response to this music, which was then passed back to me to respond to with more new music etc. This "back-and-forth" of inspiration culminated in the piece "After 9-5". Performed by Atsumi Kojima (sho) at OTOOTO, Tokyo, 13th February 2021.

(18:31) « An ordinary woman » by Tomoko Hojo

"After 9-5" was first performed as part of a live event held in collaboration with sound artist, Tomoko Hojo. When visiting a solo exhibition of Tomoko's in Autumn 2020, I was particularly taken by her piece "An ordinary woman". A note from Tomoko on the piece:

An Ordinary Woman (2018) This seven minute audio piece mainly consists of interviews and field recordings in Liverpool as well as titles of articles written about Ono. There are many negative words that have been said towards Ono, as well as sympathetic words prompting people to reconsider inconsistent evaluations of her. The views and discourses through John Lennon are largely the basis for her social identities and biases, which are especially evident in the characteristic words representing her as a female, such as 'Bag Lady,' 'Mistress', 'Widow', 'Witch' and 'Woman'. Why do they use words that emphasise her femininity? What kind of femininity do they want? What is their idea of an ordinary or extraordinary woman? And who are 'they'? <https://tomokohojo.net/>

(25:34) « TROH-moh-s » for soprano, percussion (one performer) and electronics (2013). Music: Francesca Le Lohé / Words: Sappho

As Tomoko Hojo asks “What is their idea of an ordinary woman?”, I similarly wondered “What is their (i.e. the translator’s) idea of a woman?” when writing my piece TROH-moh-s.

TROH-moh-s (τρόμος) translates as ‘trembling’; our protagonist trembling with anxiety, desire and jealousy each time she meets the object of her affections. This text by Sappho (615-550BC), usually referred to as Fragment 31, has compelled many to translate it throughout the centuries. Each translation is shaped by the translator’s own style, interpretation and agenda, thus resulting with many of the accepted translations being heteronormative in bias. This piece is my attempt at a new translation of Sappho’s work. Recording: Dana Cerminaro (soprano) at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, UK, 2013.

(36:32) « Arahnina mreža » by Ana Gnjatović (Tree bark recipes) *newly released.

Initiating the “Sound & Word Network” prompted me to reconnect with composer Ana Gnjatovic. Ana was busy setting up a fascinating project at the time, a constructed archive of faked field recordings titled “My Garden Without Me”. She invited all network members to participate in a strand of the archive, “Tree bark recipes”: A collection of sound works showing before and afters of insects and spiders inhabiting a single littleleaf linden (*Tilia cordata*). Each artist received a short text about the insect and were instructed to create something as a result of imagining the daily life and culture of the insect before or after the lockdown. Explore the results at the dedicated website: <http://www.treebarkrecipes.com/>

Here I present Ana’s and my own contribution to the collection: *Araneus cavaticus: BEFORE *more about the piece* [here](#)

(46:35) « Witness » by Francesca Le Lohé (Tree bark recipes) *newly released.

My faked field recording for *Euproserpinus Wiesti: BEFORE *more about my contribution & accompanying text* [here](#)

(48:50) « Beethoven was a Lesbian » (excerpt) by Naomi Woo and Sophie Seita

Engaging with text in a multitude of ways, Naomi Woo and Sophie Seita have created a multi-layered, impactful radio opera. A note from the duo on the project: Between lecture-performance and love letter, Beethoven Was A Lesbian is an homage to Pauline Oliveros in extravagant temporal drag. Through playful dialogue, promiscuous citation, and interactive meditations, the performance seduces the tropes of classical music in order to dominate them. Performers conduct and are conducted, listen, flirt, sing, play, recline, read, die tragically, and bask in the soprano’s voice. Listeners of this experimental radio opera can also receive a series of personalised postcards in the mail. For more information, see here:

<https://hildegardsgardeningcompanions.cargo.site/Beethoven-Was-A-Lesbian-Postcard>

(59:07) « Tristan & Isolde/T&I » by Francesca Le Lohé

(59:07) Excerpts from “Tristan and Isolde” staged at DDD Aoyama Theatre, Tokyo (2017)

(1:03:16) Live recording of “T&I”, performed by Paul Vowles (clarinet) and Gemma Beeson (piano), Sherborne, UK (2017)

In 2017, “Whole Hog Theatre” staged a new adaptation of “Tristan & Isolde” in Tokyo (sponsored by Nelke Planning; produced by Gorch Brothers). A note from WHT: *Set in a fictional universe of warring island nations reminiscent of Okinawa and mainland Japan, and Ireland and England, we*

experimented with these spectres in an Anglo-Japanese context. Created by an English director, dramaturg and composers and Japanese cast and crew, we aimed to create a play that challenged actors and audience with its hybridity – and starts conversations about national identity, sovereignty and xenophobia. <https://www.wholehogtheatre.com/tristan-isolde.html>

The composers in question were myself and Mark Choi. We both created distinct sections of music for different parts of the play and I created soundscapes using recordings of Mark's music as source material. I later went on to further develop my incidental music in a piece for clarinettist, Paul Vowles. Here, I present excerpts from the play's music alongside the duo for Eb clarinet and piano, simply titled "T&I".