



Performing/Creating with Pauline Oliveros 2013-2016

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As I sit in my studio in Kreuzberg, Berlin mixing/remixing “[EXITR](#)” my next recording release, it started to occur to me that this time feels much different than all the other projects I’ve tinkered with over the years. In fact, it has been exactly ten years since I have mixed, edited, and produced at such lengths. In 2008 I had just finished a major project spanning the previous ten years of works, 1998-2008, titled “[Harvest 10.](#)” After its release I was asked to join a friend in Europe to hear, view and experience music and theater in Paris, Bruges, Brussels and London. In 2008 and during this project that took place in Chicago, I had a team of engineers, producers, PR, graphic designers, photographers, web designers, and so forth — this team was what I later deemed as a “dream team!” I miss those years and the crew working in Chicago,

touring, collaborating with brilliant Chicago musicians such as [Jody Miller](#), [Matthew Muñiz](#), and long time childhood friend and electronic musician, [Chris Kladis \(J Class Racer\)](#), AND the most talented engineer one could hope for, [Anthony Berg](#) of Urchin Recording. Those were definitely “the days.”

However, when I ventured out to the West Coast in 2010, moving myself, my kitty-cat, and my studio to San Francisco, I was unaware of what may occur on the other end of that tunnel. It literally was a warp zone — a different life, a new starting chapter. I immediately started to meet a breadth of amazing and talented artists, whom actually were mostly women! I have come to love working with women and transgender folks over the past decade and I cannot tell you how much it has helped my own artifice and perspective as a performer. These artists would include [Eline Lima of Esquizo Filmia](#), [Maya Smira](#), [Niki Korth](#), [Renée Coulombe](#), and of course, [Pauline Oliveros](#), just to name a few.

In 2013 I was offered a spot in the Mills College MFA program for Electronic Composition and Recording Media. I immediately jumped out of the San Francisco Art Institute and landed in a ‘time capsule’ in Oakland California, a capsule of eternal and ethereal music history! When I first enrolled at Mills I had no idea that I would be working with such a brilliant milieu who had their own breadth of works and performances. Going to Mills College in 2013 was the best decision I have ever made!

While at Mills I was exposed to a very “deep listening” exercise, and was awarded an independent study with the ‘Deepest Listener,’ Pauline Oliveros herself. Right away we started sculpting projects and performances while sharing sushi both in San Francisco and Manhattan. She hired me on as part of the Deep Listening team to help design, formulate, and excel the very last Deep Listening Band release, “[Dubrobin Sonic Gems](#),” A 25th Anniversary Recording and cistern simulation dedicated to the late [David Gamper](#). I attended, documented, and assisted Pauline during her and Deep Listening’s residency in Dunrobin Canada. This is where I would also meet her partner/collaborator [IONE](#). IONE’s opening invocation at the Sonic Gym in Canada began with “It is, indeed, auspicious, that we are here together this evening.” As soon as the performance began, I realized I had become a part of an ever-evolving and promising Deep Listening history.

Thereafter Pauline appointed me as part of the tech team for the Deep Listening Conference at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 2014 and also appointed me as her lead program director for her exhibition and involvement at the [2014 Whitney Biennial](#) in New York City. While working on the graphic design for “Sonic Gems” and juggling my MFA work at Mills, Pauline and I became fast friends, and for what I would later deem as my human family outside of kin. She would guide me and my current stressors as a working performer and grad student with [Sonic Mediations](#), a practice she is duly noted for in her wide canon of works. She would say things like, “James, you need to get ‘Bug Out,’ before you get on all those planes!” And would also say things like, “If you wake up in the morning and all you want to do is create something, create it—make it happen! But if it stops being fun, what is the point of creating it?”

In 2014, Pauline traveled to San Francisco with ten copies of “Dunrobin Sonic Gems” and an invitation to come perform with her and the “Thingamajigs” at the [Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive](#) in November 2014. This was a magical performance for many reasons! One being that I would see, hug, and hear Pauline for the very last performance of 2014, and it was one of the very last performances in the historic location before BAMPFA was moved to a different venue on the UC Berkeley campus. Joining her that night were some really amazing, rad and talented performers, such as [Dan Gottwald](#), [Adria Otte](#), [Gabby Fluke-Mogul](#), not to mention the very talented performance troupe, [Thingamajigs](#). I was so humbled by the end of the evening, as it was most likely one of my most memorable collaborations/performances I had ever done with Pauline!

So as the years roll on, and her configured star-matter has been returned to the universe, I dedicate everything I have composed and concocted while studying and working with her, and on her behalf, to Pauline. These were amazing years, with amazing talents, and with the risk of sounding cliché ‘the hardest working woman in contemporary performance and theater.’ So those were “newer days,” which makes me eager to return to the Bay this fall from Berlin and Barcelona, to create some newer works with amazing musicians, not only in her honor, but for her legacy and continuing community. The very last time I spoke with Pauline over Skype in mid 2016, she was a bit tired, but her heart was still ‘in it,’ and will forever be burned on my brain as she kissed and waved goodbye over the Skype airwaves. I will miss her waving hands at the end of every performance and how she would ‘sound-off’ similarly over virtual communication. Her contributions, her works, her story, and her spirit devoted to contemporary performance and composition will be told and circulated in modern music history and women’s art history for centuries to come! I am so grateful to have been a soul-witness to it.