

Philip Miller in Conversation with Artist Jenny Kagan | Triggering Sonic Memory

- Good evening, everyone. Tonight, we welcome Philip Miller and Jenny Kagan. They will be in conversation exploring the topic, Triggering Sonic Memory. Dealing with Philip's work in process, using testimony and imaginative narratives from public and personal archives. Philip is a South African and international composer and sound artist based in Cape Town. His work is multifaceted, often developing out of collaborative projects in theatre, film, video, and sound installations. Philip is currently an honorary fellow at ARC, the research initiative in archive and public culture at the University of Cape Town. Philip trained firstly as a lawyer at the University of Witwatersrand and practised as a copyright lawyer.

In fact, he was a student of our very own Judge Dennis Davis. He then went on to study music composition in South Africa with composers Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph, who actually taught me herself, and Peter Klatzow at the University of Cape Town Music School. He completed his postgraduate studies in electro-acoustic music composition for film and television at Bournemouth University. Whilst doing so, he studied with UK composer, Joseph Horowitz. He then returned to South Africa to begin working full-time in music. He works across different musical genres and media, leading him to establish significant collaborations, including his longtime collaborator, the internationally-acclaimed South African artist, William Kenrick.

His starting point is often to draw from sonic material from public and personal archives, which are digitally processed and collaged. He has been the recipient of fellowships and residencies, including the The Rockefeller Bellagio Centre, Civitella Ranieri and the Archive and Public Culture, the APC Initiative at the University of Cape Town. In 2015, he was nominated for an Emmy Award for the movie, The Girl. Thank you, Phil, and now, welcome to Jenny.

Jenny, originally, a lighting designer, had been using the language of theatre to make installation artwork, often reflecting on the contemporary relevance of stories of survival and trauma during the Holocaust. In 2018, she was creative director for a new exhibition based at the University of Hattersfield, Through Our Eyes. Which finds new ways to use survivor testimony to tell the story of the Holocaust. Since being invited to participate in the Carnes Vienna in 2017, she has continued to make work there, exploring the Jewish experience of the city through participatory work and creative interventions in the community and public space. Her large scale, immersive experience, Out of Darkness, which tells the story of her own parent's survival in wartime Lithuania will be shown in Carnas in 2022 as part of the European capital of culture. Thank you Philip and Jenny for joining us tonight. I now hand over to you.

- We should start by unmuting ourselves, Philip.

- Say, Wendy, thank you for giving this opportunity for us to be on the series. I've listened to several of them. They've been such wonderful lectures, incredible quality, and so I'm really privileged to be on here and particularly also with Jen because Jen and I have come together in the last couple of years, as you've said, working together. We met in Lithuania. We met in

Kaunas which was known once by our ancestors as Kovno, and her parents and grandparents. We met on the first of the Biennale and of course it felt like Jen was the right person to ask to join me in this conversation. Her work also figures sound into it and we're about to start an adventure together, so maybe to say to Jen as well, thank you for being here as well with me.

- It's an honour to be here.

- So, well, I think we are going to start off with music and video quite quickly. Would you like to ask me anything before we begin?

- I would like to start with, we discussed quite a long time where to start and there was debate about which piece to start with, but Philip felt that this was the right place to start. This is cantata, Rewind, and I think perhaps it speaks for itself, Phil.

- Yeah, I mean all I will say it's the piece that the work that brought me really to start thinking about archive memory, sonic memory and testimonies. So yeah, if we could have a listen to that, have a watch and listen and we'll talk more afterwards.

Opera music plays with narration.

- [Speaker 1] When I close my eyes, somebody that looked me straight in the eyes.

- [Speaker 2] Apartheid, I don't even want to see it anywhere I go.

- [Speaker 3] I feel what has brought my sight back, my eyesight back, is to come back here and tell this story.

- [Speaker 4] But I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story.

- [Speaker 3] I had been sick for days. But now it feels like I got my sight back.

- [Speaker 5] I also want to see it with my own eyes what it did to me.

- [Speaker 6] Mr. Mqikela.

[illegible]

- [Speaker 8] There wasn't just Black people. Just Black people. There were a mixture of races.

- [Speaker 9] 7th of June, 1985. In your minds and in your hearts.

- [Speaker 10] Willingness to sit and listen to our stories and the fact that we are here.

- [Speaker 11] And make you stay over again and listen, listen to your stories and make the whole world to know about your stories. But we are doing this because we believe that if people repeat again, all their hurt that they had, as they repeat the stories again, as they repeat the stories again, as they repeat the stories again.

- Yeah, interesting watching this, I haven't heard and seen it for a while, yeah.

- So why was that the right place to start this conversation, Phil?

- Just before I answer that, I do want to acknowledge the amazing artistry of Gerhard Marcks and Maya Marcks who did the video for the piece, so. But I suppose, you know, this was in I think 2007 that I was approached by the writer poet, Antjie Krog, to perhaps consider making a piece around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. And my biggest fear was how to work with these testimonies that were being given at the Truth Commission that were so painful and so extraordinarily brutal at times. And I was really frightened of it.

I was frightened of how to deal with that. And I suppose that process then that I went into making the work, which involved a whole lot of things from talking to one of the Truth Commissioners who became my friend Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, by understanding that I had to think about this project about myself and how I stand in relation to that sound. That those memories are not my memories. That my memories of them are, I mean, I can tell you what my memory is. My memory is often driving in the car in Johannesburg. I was living in Johannesburg and listening on the radio to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 'cause it was being broadcast all the time on the radio.

So you would be doing something really banal like driving to shopping mall and you would hear testimonies of someone like Lucas Sekophere in this piece talking about how he was blinded. And the times where you would stop your car or just sit and gasp. But that's my memory experience of those testimonies. And then how to bring them into making a work of art? And that involved really a host of extraordinary people, but including me eventually having to go and meet and speak with the survivors themselves. So maybe we'll come to that part later. Yeah.

- I'm interested with what you say about being frightened of how to deal with it. That's an extraordinary thing to say and quite exciting. And one of the other reasons we talked about starting here is the fact that it's where we're going. For those who don't know, we're making the piece that we we're making for Countess is also going to be a cantata. And it reassures me to know that you're frightened in that instance because something so positive came out of it.

Because I think we're both quite frightened again.

- [Philip] Yeah.

- And in a very good way because it's very challenging to make work with such.

- Yeah, I mean maybe we should say and you know, you just chip in because I think this is going to be a conversation in the nicest way. I mean we are going to work with, I mean, it's really complex 'cause we are not looking just only at the testimonies of the history of Kaunians or the Lithuanian people during Holocaust, during the Second World War. We are looking at partisans, we're going to look at Soviet occupation, we're extending this and that's also a whole set of histories. It's one thing for me and maybe I'll ask you that. You have a very strong first link back to your parents for that history. I'm sort of two steps away from my grandparents, but this is all testimony and we are going to be working with testimony of both young people but also recorded archival testimonies. And this is really, goes to the meat of how we going to work together.

And I will say one thing to you just in terms of the meeting then I'll stop talking for a second, is what I realised, why I was so adamant that I wanted to work with you when I met you first at the Carl Cal Espinal was that you were engaging with extraordinary material yourself, history with the people of the young, well in this case a lot of young children at a school around the area, which I know, I mean, we've got not enough time, but I was aware that you were working in a way that I know I think I work with, which is to say I'm making a work that has got very, very complex stuff around testimony, memory, but I've got to make it in a way that draws in the people who perhaps are unable to look at this history so easy or don't know it. And all of the way you worked in that piece made me know that I wanted to work with you. So, but yeah.

- And all of it is so evident in cantata and it's such a piece of inspirational work that I think it's a great grounding, but as you say, what we're going on to do is perhaps even more complex in its range.

- [Philip] Yeah.

- [Jenny] And challenging.

- Yeah.

- Maybe just talk a little bit about how you see the relationship between your compositional work and your sound work with the visual, because that's something that I was very struck by watching cantata again just now, and I'm interested in how you feel about that.

- Well, it was a really interesting process because initially when I started working under, it seemed to me that it was going to be very much just a, let's called it a more conventional piece

with performance singers on stage, some kind of surtitles maybe for the testimonies, and that was it. And its first outing actually was with the director Janice Honeyman, and we did it at St. George's Cathedral, which had its own extraordinary power. The Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, was there, and it had an amazing, I always say it had a great birth, but at some point, professor David Ethel, sort of all the connections are far and wide from Williams at the, I'm having a blank, in America.

Williams University in America got involved in this piece and brought it also to Williams College. And he spoke about it needed a visual language as well. And he introduced me to Gerhard and Maya Marcks and what was interesting that the work had been written in this particular instance. So they responded to the sound, which is interesting 'cause of course sometimes I work in reverse. I often, what I call my bread and butter work, as a film composer will be, I respond to the visuals.

- [Jenny] Yeah.

- But in this case, they responded to it with amazing language that, we spoke a lot, I mean, I'm a visual person. I've always been brought up with a, dragged by my parents to art galleries. But I watching lots of movies, but I've always, I'm not afraid of the visual language. I love it, I love looking at it, I love bringing it in. So it was for me a very fantastic exploration of allowing the visuals to kind of come in and respond to the music.

- Yeah, and absolutely. And I think it's extraordinary to watch and to see that the visual feels like it's constructed in a similar way to the music, in that it's very visceral and based on a sensory perception rather than a descriptive, rather than playing any descriptive role.

- Yeah.

- Which is the way your music works so. It feels very holistic. Should we listen to some more music?

- Yeah, let's make this as like kind of music video evening.

- Yeah, absolutely, I think so. What are we going to listen to next? We were going to listen to the piece that you made. Talk a bit about the piece that you made, Remember, for the Garden of Memory.

- I mean, this was done a few years ago. I was asked to work, well, with Lauren Siegel and Clive van den Berg who were designing and curating a amazing permanent exhibition at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre. And they kind of had said to me, "We wanted to work with sound." And then I met with the director Tanny Nates. And over a period of four or five years, it took. It took a long time. The building was built first, but of course it wasn't filled with much initially. And sometimes these things happen, but there was a garden and Tanny Nate's

idea was to do a sound in the garden. And the idea was that you would walk through this permanent exhibition, which was a very dense moving, emotionally challenging exhibition. And what I should mention about this museum, which makes it so special, is that it also devotes a huge part of its exhibition to the Rwandan genocide.

It's really a holocaust museum and genocide centre that is absolutely aware of where it sits in Africa. And I thought that was always very exciting. And I was always, that was partly what really interested me in this work because I knew then I had to start to think about, I mean this idea of testimony, different memories, different experiences. And I thought the only way, and I think you asked me this, maybe we'll come back to this after we've played it, but really what I'll just say to shorten this introduction is that the piece was made using sound recorded in a series of workshops with Rwandan survivors and interviews with Holocaust survivors from South Africa. And the piece became, the idea of it is a really a quorum response. It's about a, also a dialogue between people's experiences. Maybe we should just go straight to that.

- [Jenny] Let's play.

Music plays with narration.

- I remember the words we spoke, but I didn't know it was the last time. Go be chosen. I don't know how to translate. But like you, the chosen ones, the chosen of God, go well.

- [Speaker 15] Breaking that silent, that dark cloud.

- [Speaker 14] The sky is almost constantly dark.

- [Speaker 15] You see, there's a Yiddish word called, in Polish cloud is called,

- [Speaker 14] But here it smells like constant rain falling slowly.

- [Speaker 16] Between forest and wilderness.

- [Speaker 17] I jumped in then I see crocodile waiting.

- [Speaker 18] To put one foot in front of another.

- [Speaker 19] Refugee, refugee, Rwanda, Rwanda. Refugee, refugee, Rwanda, Rwanda.

- [Speaker 20] And the wind. It rained a lot. Children playing and dancing.

- Ah.

- Sorry, I didn't want to cut it, but we have lots to get through.

- Yeah, but good to see. So do you have anything you want to say immediately about that? Or shall I ask you a question?

- Ask me some questions?

- I'll ask you some questions. As I was watching that, I was thinking about your decision to, about the name of this talk and about triggering sonic memory, 'cause for me that's asks, begs all those questions about memory and whose memory is it? And what is that about that sonic memory?

- I mean this is, you know, this is a complex thing, but yet somehow this doesn't frighten me, this question. You enter into a space where you create trust. So in the case of the Rwandan workshops with the survivors, I firstly had an amazing facilitator who's Rwandan and had a history. So firstly, I have a trust, I've built a relationship with that person. You enter into that space. And in a way the memory, and I only talk about sound and music, so the way I engaged with everyone was to say, "What are your memories of sound of childhood, of music, of songs?" Someone had Frère Jacques, I can't say that now, but anyway, a French song from French school.

And so you created, they create a sound world together, we create the sound world and I allow that sound world to come into its, a kind of its own, what would I say? It has its own kind of imagination that we're creating now together. We are talking about rain. I don't believe that you need to have that sonic memory. The triggers for them were like my, what were the triggers that I gave them? I said, "What are the sounds of birds that you remember as a child or as growing up in Rwanda? What is the song that you remember your mom sang to you?" And those then trigger a song, and then it triggers, of course it's a very sensorial thing. Music, sound.

- What's interesting is when you listen to it is it despite having no experience, zero experience of that background of sound memory. It starts to feel like it is recognisable as a memory. The the quality of the sound is recognisable as a memory. And I'm curious how that is when one's never had any connection with that history. Do you know?

- I can only understand it by saying that when I work I'm, and of course these testimonies or these stories and sounds that were made, were made in a context which I understood that we were together sharing these sounds. And there was a certain element of which I feel it's about tambra, it's about just the voices and the voicings and the, it's about really just responding. I don't think it's an intuitive thing. I was discussing this was someone the other day, but it's about you take different cues that are almost, I don't want to say universal, but yet that you, you kind of, you learn a grammar of reading. No, not reading, a grammar of listening.

You do the reading, I do the listening. But I mean, I think that becomes something that is, you bring it into your own sound world and you can hear a gasp, and anyone, whether they are

speaking Kinyarwanda or if they're speaking French, you start to feel something. I mean, I think we all know that there's a part of you when you listen to a language that you don't know the language, but there's a part of which sometimes you can feel things coming through the voice. And that allows me a connection into the sound world or, but do I need to have those memories? No, but I have to be respectful and I have to be careful.

- I think what what's interesting there is about the universality, as you say, the connection is the same with the sounds that are familiar as with the sounds that aren't familiar somehow.

- [Philip] Yeah.

- It's extraordinary.

- Exactly. But there are things that you will always, there's something that's, I've thought about it because this is trauma that's being talked about, but not through telling the story. No one in the workshops told their story. They sang for me. They made sounds of the rain. Of course the rain was this extraordinary sound that Rwandan people in the genocide speak about, the April Rains, they made those sounds for me. They made the bird sounds and then they talked about walking, When they talked about walking.

I suddenly also saw these relationships. Miriam Lichterman, who's a Holocaust survivor, still alive in Cape Town, speaks about walking on the Death March. And there's suddenly, there's the walking across borders fleeing Rwanda, and there's she walking. And suddenly these things start to really resonate and memories start to intermingle. And then I create, I suppose, a new set of perceptions through putting these together. They're kind of new perceptions in a way.

- I think that's the, we've talked about that before, haven't we? Creating a present memory as well as a past memory. And somehow this generates something current and contemporary. And that's really important, isn't it? In the work that we're making, to create something that's relevant and timely and not just reflective on the past.

- I mean, it's interesting, isn't it? Because we've asked, so we should talk about the big very beginning of our process now is to share video testimonies, which of how many, I mean, there are so many. I think you've been dealing with them more than I have yet. But how many are there? I mean, we're tonnes of them.

- We have an undeniable wealth of them. There is masses there are hundreds.

- But what's interesting is what was our instinct just to say, "Let's get young Lithuanians to listen to them and talk about them and respond to them." And in fact our next task they have for the next workshop is to find words, phrases, that perhaps resonate for them. But of course these are histories that they have, their connection is not direct either. And aren't we by asking them to do this, we're creating a new story of listening.

- Yeah.

- [Philip] That's what we thought.

- That's the challenge. That's the challenge we set ourselves.

- Yeah, exactly, yeah.

- So should we move on from new stories of listening to some very old stories? Is that a good segue?

- Oh, excellent. You said that correctly.

- That's why we work together, we're good.

- So.

- Yeah, maybe.

- Let's talk about Kaboom.

- Kaboom. So this really connects also strongly, it's a recent work, it connects very much, it's a work that is a video installation, a kind of reiteration working with William Kentridge and also my collaborator on this project was Tatuka Sibisi. And it's a really a reiteration based on the mad crazy walking opera, which I think you saw at the Tate, right? I think you were there.

- Yeah.

- The Tate Martin. And so that was a kind of extraordinary work that was so multi-layered and so many different things going on. But why I've brought it in was because at the beginning of the process of making The Head and the Load and I should just quickly say, this is a work that was commissioned, William was commissioned to make in response to the First World War centenary. And it was about really looking at Africa and the role that Black African soldiers and people not just soldiers, civilians and porters that carriers, had in the First World War. And I, at the time, in fact, it was just the beginning of my kind of fellowship at the University of Cape Town at this Public Arts and Culture Research Institute. I had met a wonderful, also a, I never know what to call people. Well, another academic who just had introduced me to an archive called the Lat Archiv, which was based in Berlin, the Humboldt University.

And this archive, which I'd not known about, had over 2000 old wax cylinder recordings of Black prisoners of war who were taken during the First World War and were taken and put into a camp, the end of the war. And German scientists and anthropologists and linguists thought,

"Well, we don't have to go to Africa, why don't we go and meet them and record their stories and interview them?" And that's what happened. And over 2000 recordings were made. And I remember going to the archive with William at the time, and it was kind of this archive, just rooms with, like archives look like just, kind of just covered in boxes and had an old wax cylinder machine. And there we were with these testimonies and I was really keen to, they'd been digitised by the way, most of them, and I was really keen to work with them, and so was William at the time. And then as the work progressed and we ended up in these enormous spaces as a big huge lead performance, it became complicated to use them.

And it comes to this question of these testimonies, okay, what were they? They were taken really under duress. No prisoner would ever have really been able to say, "I don't want to do that." They were done in the pseudo scientific eugenics, the whole eugenics thing was all going on at that time. Their context is very, very problematic. But at the time I knew I wanted to work with them. And at some point in the live, Head And The Load piece, I think William and I discussed it and I said, "You know, this is an extraordinary set of archives, but I don't think it should be here because in an audience of a thousand people, no one's going to even really hear what they are. And they scratchy, I want to find another space for them." And that space became the, firstly, the iteration of Kaboom, which we can now watch.

- Yes.

- Play that, that was a long introduction.

- Extraordinary.

- [Philip] Thank you.

- In my role as the nag of this relationship. I have to say we're quite tight on time now, so.

- We'll skip the next one so.

- But let's just wait, I think that's something we really important that we were going to talk about here though, which is about the ethics of testimony. And I think that's something that we shouldn't leave this conversation without touching on.

- Yeah, I mean, so just very quickly, the recordings, what I did was I, there these recordings are long recording each interview, but in the questionnaire that was asked of the person being interviewed, of the prison of war, they were asked to count in their language whether their mother tongue was Wolof or Swahili or isiZulu, And they would count. And the theme, one of the very essential themes that William had fleshed out with me over this piece was numbers, the enormous numbers of people who died.

And I suddenly, you know, that little moment where you go, "Ping, I want to use these countings,

these numbers being counted as part of the way of working with this." So of course, what am I doing? Well, I think we've discussed earlier, I've only discovered there's an essay written by a composer, contemporary composer called Plunderphonics and Plundering Archive. And I looked at that word and I thought, "That's just a horrible word, to plunder, I don't." I was like, "I don't plunder archives." That sounds like stealing and robbing.

I mean, but I then I had to think about it and the context of an archive is very important because of how it was made, as we've discussed. But I believe as artists we should be able to use testimonies, to use archives, and challenge people as to how we hear it, see it. I mean I think there are many things here. I'm going to try and be brief and maybe so you can respond. Stuff sits in archives where no one has access. So the Lat Archiv, this place into Berlin, was really just a small space for academic people to come in and out. Now they've just recently opened it up and said, "Arts practitioners, other composers, sound artists, visual art can work there and take things from it." But initially for all these years it's been a little dark archive.

So there's for me that of pulling this archive back out, sending it back out into the world. It's that, it's the fact that I believe we should be able to work with this material. And it also does, I mean there's such, the question, do you repatriate that archive? I was that a conference last year in Berlin where there was this question of what do you do with an archive? These are not people who are no longer alive. We don't even know who their families are, their children, their grandchildren. Do you repatriate those sound archives? Do you give it back to the countries? I mean these are really complicated questions, but I believe that if you work with it in a way that is respectful, but I say respectful, not in that you can't sometimes do things to it and do what I did, which was cut it and took that archive and I created another context for it but I believe, yeah.

- You're stimulating that conversation by using them. And I think that's all we can do and all we can say

- [Philip] Yeah.

- At this point. We've talked about it before and it just felt something that we should not leave this conversation without talking about a little.

- So question to you and well question for ourselves in this way. We're talking about using fragments of testimonies, little phrases, words, we are going to take things totally out of context and we're doing this with the full knowledge that they don't try in any way reflect people's stories in any way. That's our, what's do I call this? Our secrets.

- We're dabbling in plunderphonics.

- We are dabbling in plunderphonics, we are.

- And with the best intentions and with.

- And one other caution or caveat to the plunder word, which I still got to find a better word than that, is we're acknowledging where this stuff comes from. That's also really important 'cause stealing, normally you don't say, "Hey, I'm stealing from." It's really important, I'm not being facetious. Now you have to also acknowledge where this comes from, how it's evolved, where, and context. I do believe.

- I was going to say, the context is all as well because the same words asked by, as answers to two different questions.

- [Philip] Yeah.

- So it's not only the answers, it's the questions that have been asked that you have to reflect on.

- Sean, we're going to skip the next one 'cause we're running out of time, and just go to Special Boy, which is the last video. And I have good reason as a segue into this 'cause the question of ethics and plundering and then plundering my own personal archive. Okay, so Sean, when you're ready, just Special Boy.

Music plays with narration.

- [Speaker 22] Now play your new piece for me, The Secret.

- [Philip] I don't get to play outside as much as the other kids.

- [Speaker 23] Sparky, you are a good student. Don't stop your piano studies now. ♪ I see ♪

- [Philip Family, friends, Rabbi Sherman and Mrs. Sherman, I'd like to thank you all very much for coming here today. And I'd like to especially thank mom and dad for being the most wonderful parents in the world. It is the most marvellous feeling to have to know when there is a problem. There's always your parents to turn to.

- Well, maybe let me start by saying, it's a personal archive that's very painful for me in a whole lot of ways. The archive is really truly, 'cause people don't believe this, it's a cassette recording of me practising my speech at the bar mitzvah function after I had said my portion on a tape recorder that was given to me by my aunt and uncle a few days before my bar mitzvah. So there's that voice you hear, the little boy's voice, is my voice at, this is in 1977, and a year later my father died, and two months ago my mom died.

So this is a hard piece and I'm busy writing an essay about it right at the moment for a catalogue. But this piece then inter weaves another recording talking about back to sonic triggers, which is a recording of a record called, Sparky And His Magic Piano, which I listened to

as a kid over and over again. And when I decided in two, I think it was 2007, or thereabouts, to make a work for the, actually first for the Spear Contemporary Exhibition, and then later it went to the Jewish Museum, I decided I, something wanted me to go and look back at memory in this way, my own memory, my own archive. I want to see what does it feel like to plunder your own archive and take it and listen to that voice?

And it really brought out some very difficult things for me. As a child I was bullied terribly at school and I always had a problem with my voice. I thought I had a girly voice and I was terrified of this voice I had. And so listening to that unbroken voice of me as the boy of 13, is a very loathing thing for me because it's about self loathing and a fear that I was going to be, I was called the morphy at school, people and the word morphy for those of you who are not South African is a derogatory slang word for being gay, for being queer, and it's an offensive word, it's a hurtful word.

At times now people are in 2020, well it's less, it's been re appropriated again, but as a young boy, it just was very hard for me. And so that idea of being this lonely boy sitting at the piano like Sparky and his magic piano identified with, and re-listening to that record when I started to make the work was an enormous trigger for me. But it wasn't just nostalgia, it was something much more. The experience of listening to it and how I was going to engage with it, which was by putting my adult voice with it and cutting into it and shouting out words like morphy into it, enabled me to again, create a new way of listening it for myself. So as I said, it's about trying again to find the triggers to make the work was this sonic material. Maybe you have something, some thoughts about that.

- I think it's a really interesting point to arrive at having started at the very broad point of the public rate. And given that we were going to hand over to questions for the last 15 minutes and we only have five minutes left, I think perhaps we should open the floor to other questions rather than just our own.

- [Philip] Okay, thanks. Thank you.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Jenny, thank you very much. So I wanted to start off Philip, by asking you about your recent work on Influenza 1918 that you've used as a way to raise funds for your colleagues during the Covid crisis. And I was hoping you could tell the audience a little bit about that work. Obviously the symbolism is clear from the title, but how you've modernised it for now and where and how the fundraising is going.

A: Yeah, well, in the first few weeks of strict lockdown, a lot of singers who I've worked with, I've built relationships with them over many years. Some go back to the Rewind cantata, some I've worked with on, with Williams Head On The Load, were in touch with me and struggling, struggling financially, had no work, as you know, all over the world, people have lost so much

work and particularly artists, performers. And I said to them, "Look, you know, I want to help you but let's try and make this slightly broader than just the few of us." So I said, "Let's make a song together." And at the time, the journalist, Mark Avis, who's my dearest friend, I should just say, "My dearest friend." Not the journalist and the writer and sorry that's a private joke.

But anyway, Mark told me about the song Influenza in 1918, which was a song composed by Ruben T Kaluza in at that time in response to the Spanish Flu epidemic. And this was a fascinating song and I started to research it and then I shared this research with a group of singers. There were about 18 singers and they started to learn the music. I rearranged it and we did the entire making of it, Carly, we did it using cell phones, voice messaging, the basic lowest common denominator just literally singing into the cell phones. I had a backing track so they could sing in time, which they got on their cell phones.

And that became a music video, which was also constructed using video footage of themselves under lockdown. And so far, and it's been so amazing, we've raised just through amounts of being uses we've raised almost a hundred a thousand Rand, which has helped keeps really this community of musicians and singers growing. And yeah, it continues. It's on social media, Instagram, it's on my Facebook page. There are ways and we will just keep it going. In fact, we going to make a new song. The singers themselves said to me last week, "Let's do something new." So watch the space, we're doing a new song.

Q: I've posted the link in the chat for anybody who would like to learn more about it. So last year in an interview, you said the sound of now, you viewed as the sound of shouting and that you think perhaps the world is not good at listening to each other anymore. I wondered what you would say the sound of this Covid pandemic has been.

A: Hmm, good question. I think, kind of, you know, initially I would've said to you the sound was of quietness in the first period of time. And you just the literally, my own experience was in those initial weeks of being able to hear things that all of us normally hear, the birds, wind, the sea, I live right by the sea, but I could hear every way of crash into my living room. Initially it was that so I would've said first silence, but no, not anymore. I feel we're still shouting. And I mean, I think we're shouting because the political leaders of the world, most of them are just, their voices are so, what's the word? Overwhelming.

That what could be something that we could listen to each other. We're not listening anymore because we've been overwhelmed by the Trumps and the Bolsonaros, and in fact it frightens me how right now, and there's still so much anger and I think also, but in some ways this is also positive because if you think about Black Lives Matter and the way that's taken over in the world as well, there's been sound and that's good sound. So I don't want to be all doom and gloom, but I think we're still shouting. We're still shouting actually. So that those few weeks of shutdown, well, of birds and tweeting birds, well, I think that's over.

Q: So many of your works have focused on quite harrowing and tragic periods of history. The

Rwandan Genocide, the Holocaust, The Head and the Load, which honoured the million plus Black Africans who died in World War One. Do you feel you are drawn to those difficult subjects and how do you as a composer navigate them?

A: I think I've always understood myself as an artist who thinks about what's going on around me. That I'm not an artist who immediately wants to, or composer that my immediate reaction is to go to nature or, and use those as my inspiration. I'm in the world of my country and I think about what was going on all the time. So I've always been, I suppose politically conscious, whatever that means. And so I've been drawn to complex questions around myself, what it means to live in South Africa, both during Apartheid, which I grew up in as I grew up. And that period was a formative period from which you have to really think how that formed you.

And it did for me and it, my parents formed my thoughts around human rights. And so, yes, I am drawn to that work and I am always thinking about the injustices. I do believe that art in the broader sense and music very much because I believe in this cliché that this trite thing where music is universal, but I do believe it has an incredibly important healing power and allows people to communicate with each other. So yes, I am drawn to that and it doesn't necessarily always have to be something that is, the trauma, there's something in the Rewind cantata that the, in fact, one of the people testify, and I heard it tonight, said that if you keep repeat telling the story, you can start to heal.

And so I believe in that power of healing of speaking and singing and healing. Nomonde Calata, Mrs Calata, from The Cradock Four, when I used to talk to her off the show, 'cause she used to come to the Rewind cantata show, used to say to me, she used to say to me, "I want you to hear that cry." Because Sibongile Khumalo the singer, sings her cry, the cry of Mrs. Nomonde Calata, She said, "I want to hear that cry over and over again. It soothes me, it's a solve, it's a balm."

Q: So you and William Kentridge have worked together for over two decades, on and off. How do you start each collaboration.

A: Really, I think how it happens is that really William will approach me often with a subject that he has been thinking about, or has been commissioned to look at, and from there we have a conversation most often. We talk about what he's thinking. He may have drawings to show me, he may have images. So there's initially a kind of conversation that happens usually in a very, very informal way. And that then allows me to go back and start thinking sonically and that might be saying, "Oh, have you heard this?" Or, "I've just had this idea." And that conversation develops in a kind of contemporaneous way. And we both start working, me in the world of sound and music and William of course with images.

And then we start to play together and see what things, the magic of moving image and sound continue astounds me, how you read images differently with different kinds of sounds and music. In the same way can be re-listened to reheard by images. And we know the classic

Hitchcock, Psycho, shower scene, you have it with no sound and it's completely different thing visually, but in a more profound way. What it does is it allows us to experiment in our work process and really see what happens. And that gathers a kind of impulse and momentum and at some point we'll find something. So in Williams film, Other Faces, which is an extraordinary form of the so XT series, there's one of the first sequences he showed me which was of this Hadada, a Johannesburg bird, pecking on the landscaping and in fact on the ground and walking around.

And I then took that small short sequence which he'd given me and I worked with a singer, Anna Sena, and instead of in fact saying to Ann, "Let's mimic the actual cry of the Hadida." Which is a horrible raucous kind of crow like sound. I asked to make tiny little bird-like voices, small bird. And those tiny little voices became something else entirely. That became then part of an idea of lost language. And that then works in a whole different sequence in the film that William shows with his mother. And that's how it works. It's sort of, it's becomes quite a organic process.

Q: Do you find that you have a commonality of instruments which you use as you're creating the sonic memories across different cultures?

A: Voice. Obviously voice is important for me, I believe the voice is so, it brings so much to particularly to testimony and personal memory. The voice, the tambra, the gaps between, and then singing, and the fact that the voice comes out of the body. I like the connectedness of the voice coming out of the body. If you play an instrument, you have this one removed back. If you're a cellist, yes, you're using the bow with your body but it's not coming directly out of you. And I like that feeling of sound generating out of your body the visceralness of it.

Q: Do you feel that your South African roots and South African heritage is visible across every piece you've composed?

A: No, not every piece. And I think I'm glad that's not the case. I think at times I'm influenced by so many different things. So I can be influenced by, in Head And The Load, the big piece with William, I was very influenced by two different things. I was influenced by the modernist composers that were just entering into the musical realm of Sternberg, Shasta Covich at that moment, Hindemith. And so I kind of immersed myself in that. But I was also interested in The Sounds of War and the Zulu Chants, and in fact, what was interesting, we were working with my collaborator to Tuko Sibiso, who had actually perhaps a more involved immersive experience with the contemporary modernist music.

I tended to work often and gravitate to some of the very strong African, so-called, folk music, of the time of old archival music, so I play with it. And I don't think I, but I do think that South African, the soundscape of South Africa has influenced me from the kind of madness of the city sounds of being in Johannesburg when I'm there or my history of being part of, at the time of going into democracy, being part of protests and hearing chants and continuing to think about the sounds and voices and music of South Africa in the streets. It excites me.

- So Sean has managed to find a clip from Influenza 1918 on SoundCloud. So we're just going to play a minute of that to wrap up and that concludes the Q and A section, and then I'll hand back over to Wendy.

- [Philip] Thank you.

Music playing.

- So beautiful. Phil, thank you for a truly moving session. Sounds are so evocative. And over the last hour we have dived into your creative brilliance and you two took me down memory lane when you mentioned Sparky's Magic Piano. 'Cause I remember growing up with Sparky as a little girl. So much so, oh my goodness.

- We'll have to listen to it together.

- I have to say Phil, your South African soul is woven through many of your creations and opens up a language of Africa to the rest of the world. You have brought to life many important dark periods of history, making them accessible to your global audience. Jenny, thank you for steering us through this same journey, helping us to learn our Phil's legendary work. We are looking forward to joining you both in 2022 in Lithuania to experience your mutual collaboration. So to both of you, a very big thank you, a big distanced hug. And on that note I'll say goodnight and thank you to everybody for joining us.

- Thank you, Wendy. It's a real privilege. Beautiful, beautiful thing you've done. Thank you.

- Thank you and thank you, Jenny. Night, night, everybody.

- [Philip] Night.