

Inter-Centre Research Exchange Report

For a research exchange at the UC San Diego Department of Music,
La Jolla, California

Yuval Adler, PhD Candidate in Music Technology, McGill University

Dates of Exchange: September–December, 2022

Exchange Supervisors: Prof. Stephen McAdams (CIRMMT, McGill) and Prof. Rand Steiger (UCSD)

Main Purpose of the Trip

The main reason for traveling to UC San Diego Department of Music was to document contemporary orchestration practice and the associated creative process among advanced graduate students and faculty at a leading partner academic institution. The specific timing of the trip allowed me to document and assist with UCSD's running of the pilot version of the CORE 3 research-creation seminar. The CORE (Composer-Performer Orchestration Research Ensemble) seminars are a cross-institution project where student composers and performers at several participating universities learn about orchestration research, build on these ideas to formulate exploratory compositions, perform these newly created pieces, and exchange these pieces between different institutions' performing ensembles. These seminars act both as a research-creation hub for student musicians, and an opportunity for researchers to document the learning and creative processes the students undertake. The CORE project is housed within the ACTOR (Analysis Creation and Teaching of Orchestration) partnership, and this context gives participating students access to some of the most current research in the field. CORE 3 (the third iteration of this seminar) is unique in its addition of electronics to the previously used septet of acoustic instruments: Piano, Vibraphone, Flute, Bass Clarinet, Trombone, Violin, and Cello. This hybrid ensemble is meant to offer students the chance to explore orchestration topics relevant to contemporary electro-acoustic situations. I joined this pilot offering of the CORE 3 seminar to further my dissertation work on contemporary orchestration practice, help formulate the CORE 3 hybrid electro-acoustic ensemble offering for my work within ACTOR, and further my exposure to teaching methods for the topics covered by the seminar.

The students and staff at UC San Diego were very open and cooperative towards my documenting their work. During my stay I was able to record tens of hours of weekly seminar discussions, conduct individual interviews with each of the students and faculty, collect early draft scores, and archive student and faculty presentations about their proposed projects. The seminar at UCSD was set-up in such a way that the first rehearsals and the final performances of the pieces will occur in the following winter/spring quarters, so the final scores and recordings are forthcoming. Some of the students were planning compositional projects while others were formulating research projects about the music being created by their peers, and the two professors involved in the seminar, Prof. Rand Steiger and Prof. Roger Reynolds, were both formulating their own compositional projects for the same ensemble in parallel to the students. I

will share more about the individual projects of UCSD students and professors in a future report for ACTOR (from which I also received funding for this trip.) This report will also be made publicly available for anyone curious about specific details of the research-creation projects being formulated.

For my thesis, I was also looking for opportunities to meet and interview advanced students in contemporary music composition and performance outside of the CORE seminars. I had the opportunity to meet several students at UCSD which were open to be interviewed. These meetings came about through several other opportunities and events I could engage in while visiting UC San Diego.

Additional Engagements

The first added benefit to my trip was that I was able to meet up with fellow ACTOR student collaborators Berk Schneider and Peter Ko to further our own cross-institutional research-creation project. Meeting in person allowed us to explore and record unique instrumental sounds which we will use in our project-in-progress, called Timbrenauts. More details on this project will also be shared through the ACTOR website and at the upcoming ACTOR summer workshop, when the project is concluded.

While at UCSD, Prof. Roger Reynolds generously invited me to join in open conversations with him as well as with his group of graduate students about various topics in contemporary composition. Through this context I learned of doctoral student Sang Song's new composition for trombone solo and orchestra. This piece was premiered on campus with the La Jolla Symphony and Berk Schneider as soloist. The UCSD Department of Music has a constant output of student creations and performances like this, which often display current and exploratory musical practices. This campus culture aligns with my research interests well. I attended several other concerts and events, like Song's premiere above, and tried to meet students to recruit for my research interviews. Unfortunately, later in the quarter most activities were postponed or canceled due to the University of California graduate student unions' strike that took place during the end of the fall quarter across the state. While the strike affected my intended work, I understood and supported the students' efforts.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Thanks to the help of my local hosts I was able to collect a wealth of useful data for my dissertation work, to further existing collaborations between CIRMMT, McGill, and UCSD colleagues, and create new connections that will hopefully grow even more moving forward. I would like to thank CIRMMT and ACTOR for granting me funding in support of this research exchange trip. I am also grateful for the technical and administrative staff at UCSD, which provided me with a personal workspace and access to office facilities, cameras and recording gear, and AV studio time. A lot of my work at UCSD was facilitated by my local advisor, Prof. Rand Steiger, and with continued support from my McGill advisor, Prof. Stephen McAdams. UCSD Prof. Roger Reynolds was generous with his time and was active in making sure my stay was fruitful, including and on top of the work I originally came to UCSD for. The hospitality of

Berk Schneider and his partner Denise, who hosted me in their home in Oceanside, enabled me to stretch my funding to allow for such an extended stay in southern California; they provided for much more than room and board, and I hope we get to meet for many more trips and dinners in the future. And lastly, I thank the many UCSD students and community members with whom I've had the pleasure to interact with through music, research, and other matters alike.

As an international visitor both at McGill and UCSD, I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples whose lands I inhabit. The UC San Diego campus was built upon the territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. The Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land since time immemorial. Today, the Kumeyaay people continue to maintain their political sovereignty and cultural traditions as vital members of the San Diego community. McGill University is situated on unceded territory, land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations.