

## Surveying composers part II: Interviews with composers regarding music discovery and their relationship to library collections

Does a “score” have to be tangible?

Can “new music” be a genre?



# Presentation Outline

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- Summary of Part I
- Objectives of Part II
- Overview and analysis
- Ongoing initiatives and further questions

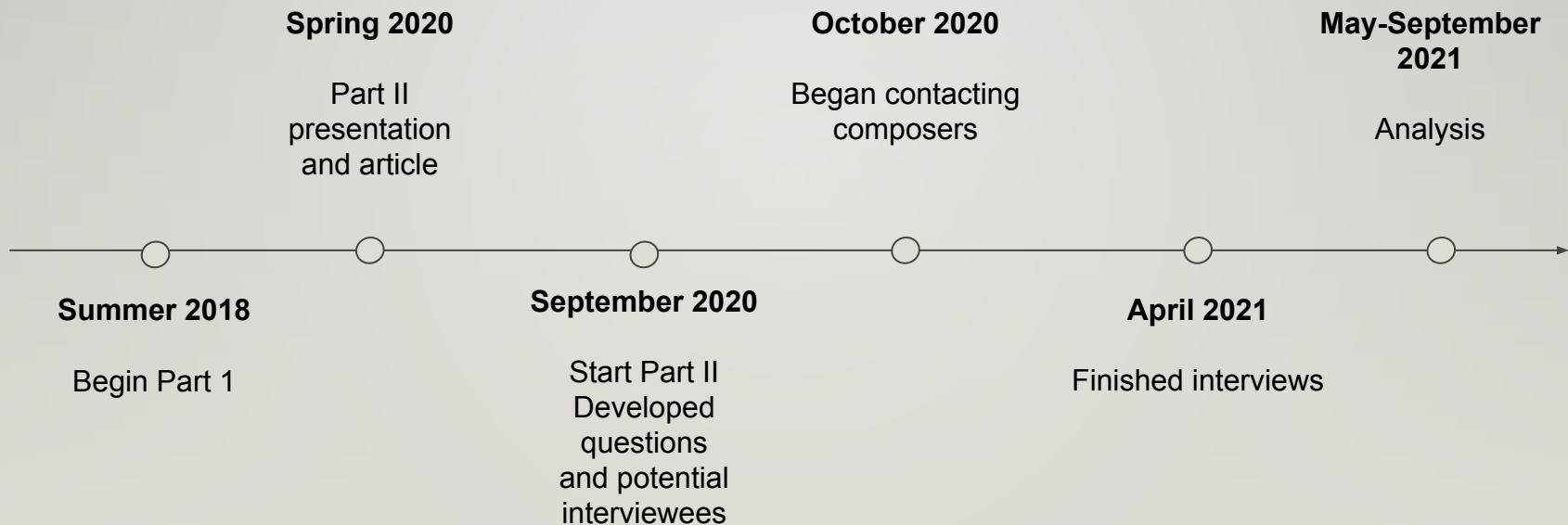
# Summary of Part I

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- The initial survey took a new approach towards conversation and engagement between **librarians** and **composers**, by gathering information from the creators of new music.
- We gained new insight into the way composers **engage** with publishers and promoting their work.
- It raised additional questions about **collecting contemporary works** and possible future directions for research.

# Project Timeline

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# Objectives of Part II

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- Interview composers with **global perspectives**, dig deeper into **compositional styles, formats**, and current understanding of **libraries**.
- Learn about **diverse perspectives**, both regarding the creative **process** and **discovery**.
- How can we assist in the **discovery, collection**, and **access** of contemporary music scores?

# Interview Process

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- Invitations sent to 1-4 composers with available time slots
- Follow up with confirmation and four basic questions
- Interviews ran between 25-60 minutes with one person asking the questions and the other taking notes and adding additional follow-up questions
- We recorded each interview with permission allowing us to use the Zoom transcript tool to allow for further editing

# Interview Questions

**1**

**Do you consider your work to be a part of a specific genre or genres?**

**2**

**What is the format(s) of your output?  
[Do you create works that are only in a specific format. If so, what is the specific format?]**

**3**

**Are you familiar with library requirements for collecting or depositing your work?  
How do we engage in a conversation with composers?**

**4**

**How do you promote your work?**

# 1

## Do you consider your work to be a part of a specific genre or genres?

Defining a genre can “**close doors** and place things in easily identifiable shoeboxes.”

-Interviewee

“Genre is a reductive, old-fashioned, and **inherently problematic** idea, and we should all be eager to see it rendered moot, but I remain curious about the contours of a post-genre world—what that might open up for the future, and what might be sacrificed.”

Amanda Petrusich, *New York Times*, March 2021

“Explorations of microgenres can help to fill out the picture of a **particular historical moment**, while at other times they help to **show lines of influence** or to trace an under-regarded stage of development in a larger genre.”

Anne Stevens and Molly O'Donnell, *The Microgenre: A Quick Look at Small Culture*



## Choosing a genre is impossible

- I don't know how.
- It's hard to silo.
- I wish I did.
- It's not really relevant.
- We are dealing with words to describe music, which is always terrible.
- It's quite hard to define.

## I don't want to label my work with a genre

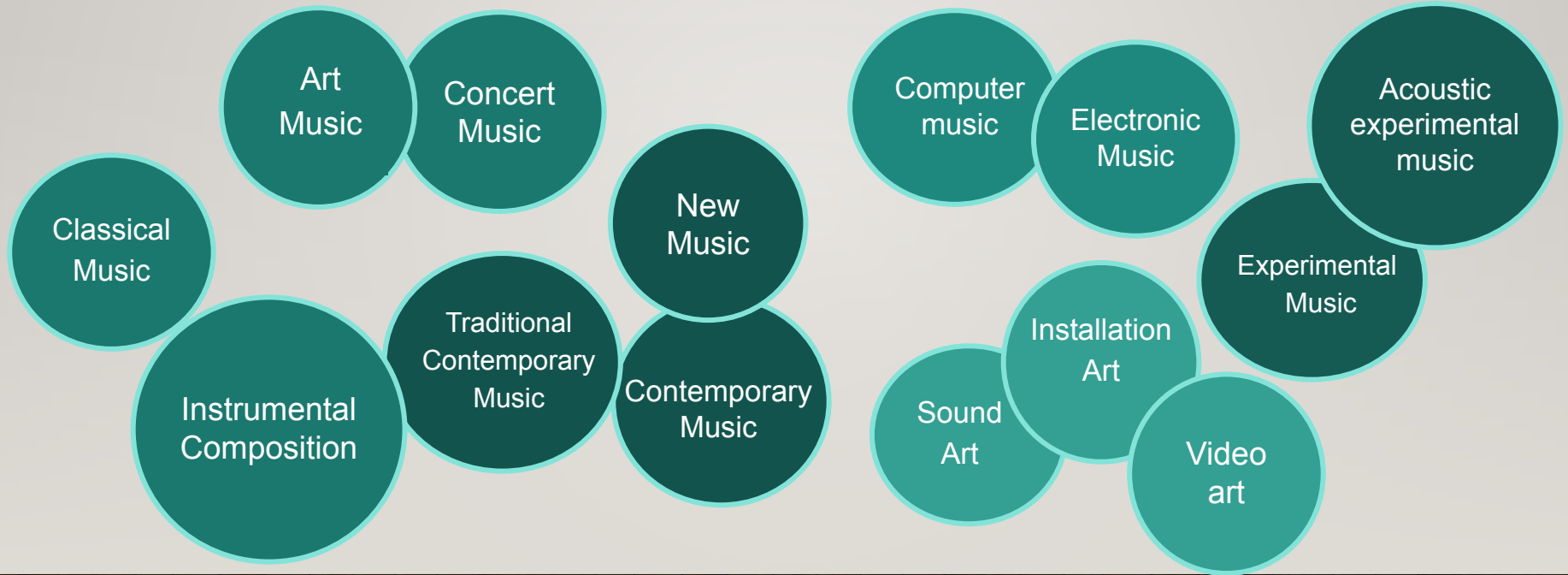
- I don't like the idea because it is there to close doors.
- I hope to be outside of genre.
- I get a little cringy.

## Genre might be possible or necessary

- There comes a point when these classifications do matter, even though we might not want them to.
- If I go into the library I want to be able to find stuff.
- If there's not a genre, how will they find it?
- The concept is always moving, not stable.

“Today, there is a specific genre, contemporary classical music. Others use the word modern, but neither of these terms provides information that is **useful for describing or searching.**”

-Interviewee



## LoC Genre/Form Terms

Ambient music (Electronica)  
Art music  
Electronica (Music)  
Functional music  
Installation works (Art)  
Music video  
Popular music  
Sound art  
Soundscapes (music)  
Spectral music  
Text-sound compositions  
Video art  
Video installations (Art)  
Visual works

## LoC Medium of Performance Terms

Band  
Big band  
Computer  
Electronic instrument  
Electronics  
Electronium  
Instrumental music  
Live electronics  
Orchestra  
MIDI controller  
Mixed media  
Pre-recorded audio  
Processed sound  
Sampler  
Sequencer  
Sound synthesizer  
Synthesizer  
Visuals  
Wind controller

“Post-genre thinking

...**objective judgment** of music towards a **subjective reality**...

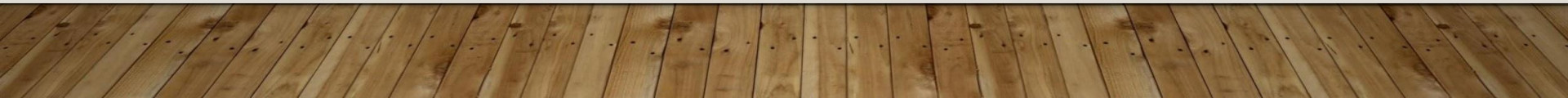
...**individual intent** of the composer.

...**allowing full expression of an individual composer’s musical worldviews.**”

...**what language do we use to discuss music instead of genre-based language?**

...**create cohesive language**...

-Hannah Schiller, *New Music USA*, 2017



2

What is the format(s) of your output?

[Do you create works that are only in a specific format. If so, what is the specific format?]

“We engage with new resources that define how we engage with new art. Investing in the research to really understand. This involves **new formats to portray the cultural heritage** as we understand it. It helps us to define why we’re still relevant in today’s conversations.”

-Interviewee



## Score or Final Manifestation

- Tangible instructional format (i.e. score)

vs.

- Final iteration of a work that is any format, with or without instructions for a future performance (i.e. final manifestation)

## Technology as part of the Final Manifestation

- Technology as **part of the representation**, such as patches or accompanying material
- Recordings that represent **one iteration/ performance of the work**; the work may or may not have other representations

## Final Manifestation as Multimedia

- Multimedia in analog or digital formats that represents the **final iteration of the work**

# 3

Are you familiar with library requirements for collecting or depositing your work? How do we engage in a conversation with composers?

“The reason your work [in libraries] is so important is because composers are moving away from publishing houses. **We are in a transition time** ... from publishing houses and cd companies, which are going to disappear.”

-Interviewee



# Library Strategy

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“Music needs to be out in the world for us to experience.”

-Interviewee

Create a MLA page that would include:

- How to contact your local library;
- How to contact a library vendor;
- Physical and digital storage requirements;
- Benefits of having works held in a library.





# 4

## How do you promote your work?

“There is a connection between how we live with the way we promote our works and how we are paid.”

-Interviewee

**Personal Websites**

**Commissions**

**Social Media**

**Word of Mouth**

# Ongoing Initiatives

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- Liaison to the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM)



- Continued efforts of the MLA Electronic Scores Working Group



# Further questions

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- How do we use this research to support discovery and accessibility?
- Where are the gaps in our understanding and knowledge?
- With an ever-changing landscape, are there new ways to think about how we talk about and label genre?
- How do we address future challenges as an association instead of each library on its own?



# Thank you!!!

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