

SIRVENT, MARIA LIHUEN, M.M. *It is. It is not: A Composition for Narrator and Electronics*. (2020)

Directed by Dr. Mark Engebretson. 34 pp.

*It is. It is not* is a musical composition for narrated voice and fixed electronic media. In this composition, I explored the transformation of musical material in a way that makes the experience of the passage of time in music rely on memory and familiarity. I approached this exploration from the metaphor of music as a time machine represented through the interaction of certain compositional processes with the content of the text.

Starting with a text that explores in sometimes humorous ways the prospect of time travel, I created a composition that involves memory not only of elements within the work itself, but also the memory of other music from the past. For this, I included references to my previous compositions, *en castellano es lejos* (2018) and *In 1964* (2019).

This thesis includes brief sections on time perception in musical experience, the use of external references in musical works, a discussion of these procedures in my piece, plus information about the rhythmic patterns employed and the musical form.

IT IS. IT IS NOT: A COMPOSITION FOR NARRATOR AND ELECTRONICS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Music

Greensboro  
2020

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Date of Final Oral Examination

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*It is. It is not* is a musical composition for narrated voice and fixed electronic media. With this composition, I explored the transformation of musical material in a way that makes the experience of the passage of time in music rely on memory and familiarity. I intended to artistically reach out to the metaphor of music as a time machine. I approached this goal from the transformations of three main structural pillars of the piece: the text, certain rhythmic patterns, and references to my previous compositions, all of which have incidence on the musical form structure of the composition.

The musical form is determined both by the content of the text, including the point of view of the narrator regarding time travel, and the musical elements of the playback track. *It is. It is not* has three main sections (ABA') connected by transitions in between. These transitions are created by the transformations of three rhythmic patterns overlapped to the increasing presence of obscured elements from *en castellano es lejos*. In this way, there are no sharp edges between the main sections, which contributes to the perception of the passage of time as a constant flow rather than a fragmented succession of events.

The text is about time travel and whether such thing is possible. It starts from confident statements about the feasibility of traveling through time, conveniently

underestimating every word that hints otherwise. This position is gradually transformed by the confrontation with a contradicting viewpoint, where the notion of going back in time is just fiction and all there is left from the past is memory. The content of the text is mirrored in the musical elements of the playback track by the behavior of certain rhythmic patterns and the presence of references to my previous compositions.

There are three rhythmic patterns that are transformed in different ways. The transformation of the beginning is the first hint to the conclusion of the narrator, who realizes that change is the main way in which the passage of time is perceived. These changes are also inspired in the idea stated in the text, that the act of remembering changes the way one feels about the object being remembered.

For the references to my previous compositions, I used sounds from a recording of *en castellano es lejos* (2018) and compositional procedures and imitations of musical materials from *In 1964* (2019). These references are not direct musical quotes, because the sounds are transformed in various ways from what they were, into something new. As well as the rhythmic pattern transformations, these changes are based on the idea that nothing comes back from the past intact. However, the references can be identified if the listener is familiar with the original source. This connection was favored by the performances of both *en castellano es lejos* and *In 1964* in the concert where *It is. It is not* was premiered.

Even though time structures of music have an impact on how the passage of time is perceived by the listener (which I explain further in the next chapter)<sup>1</sup>, in making the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 23–25.

piece, I was focused more on the exploration of technical procedures of transformation, and less on concerned about perception and the subjective aspects of it. That said, I begin the discussion by examining some basic principles pertaining to time perception (Chapter II). I follow with brief comments on musical references that in some way inspired or served as an example for references to other music within *It is. It is not* (Chapter III). Finally, I explain in detail how this composition was constructed, and how this is related to the listener's experience of time (Chapter IV).

## CHAPTER II

### TIME IN MUSIC

The perception of the passage of time in music and the way time is structured through sound is not independent from history and culture. When I think about time in music, I come mostly from a Western concert music tradition. According to Jonathan Kramer, in the Western culture “we live by the clock and by causality. For us, music *does* unfold linearly.”<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge the fact that other traditions may have impacted my work, but my approach with this piece of music is still inherently rooted in Western culture, and therefore, linear.

There are many composers who have written about time in music and devoted their own compositions specifically to this topic. Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007), John Cage (1912–1992), and Morton Feldman (1926–1987) are three whose music and writings had a huge impact on twentieth-century music, and on my own composition as well.

Time is the fundamental element of music. John Cage’s *4’33’’* (1952) shows this, since it is a piece that only has time parameters as an intentionally composed element. That composition is a good example that time, more so than sound, is the constant in music.

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 23–25.

In the article “Dualisms of Time,” Michael Rofe explains that, “the entities the composer organizes are pulses of sound with characteristics of pitch, volume, duration, and so on, the background against which that organization takes place is time.”<sup>3</sup> Rofe analyses Webern’s Symphony as a case study. In this piece there is a serial technique where a row and its retrograde appear simultaneously. He argues that a full listening is required in order to recognize this procedure. This is the starting point for him to argue that “it takes time to hear music, and it takes interactions between the temporal domains of past, present and future to detect patterns in music.”<sup>4</sup>

Rofe makes a metaphor between time in music and the Newtonian or Einsteinian paradigms of time. Applied to music, according to the model of Newtonian time, “time passes at a uniform speed.” On the other hand, in the Einsteinian model, perception is affected “from the amount and type of information/activity contained in a timespan ... to familiarity with the type of information/activity under consideration, to the state of mind of the listener.”<sup>5</sup>

Michael Rofe’s concept of Einsteinian time is also related to Karlheinz Stockhausen’s article “Structure and Experiential Time.” In that article, Stockhausen argued for a concept he called “experiential time.”<sup>6</sup> According to Stockhausen, when one

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<sup>3</sup> Rofe, “Dualisms of Time,” 342.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Rofe, “Dualisms of Time,” 342.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rofe, “Dualisms of Time,” 347.

<sup>6</sup> Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Structure and Experiential Time,” *Die Reihe*, 2 (1958): 64.

listens to music, repetition and surprising events have an impact on time passing “quicker” or “slower”<sup>7</sup> respectively.

...when we hear a piece of music, processes of alteration follow each other at varying speeds; we have now more time to grasp alteration, now less. Accordingly, anything that is immediately repeated, or that we can recollect, is grasped more rapidly than what alters. We experience the passage of time in the intervals between alteration: when nothing alters at all, we lose our orientation in time. <sup>8</sup>

The concept of surprise is interesting because it can be applied to many musical elements and not just change, novelty, or contrast. Actually, Stockhausen is aware that too much contrast can become repetitive, and therefore, not surprising. According to him,

...our senses are extremely sensitive to absorb the unexpected alteration, to adjust themselves to it. Thus after a short time a constant succession of contrasts becomes just as ‘boring’ as constant repetition: we stop expecting anything specific, and cannot be surprised: the overall impression of succession of contrast is levelled down to a single information.<sup>9</sup>

Morton Feldman’s compositions, especially his late works, comprise an excellent example of the extent to which a composition can alter perception of time. In an interview, Charles Shere asked Feldman whether a very long piece of music required any special consideration. Feldman answered that a long piece requires a sense of scale. He explained that “it is one thing to try to fill up a ten by ten canvas. But it is another thing to

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<sup>7</sup> Stockhausen, “Structure and Experiential Time,” 64.

<sup>8</sup> Stockhausen, “Structure and Experiential Time,” 64.

<sup>9</sup> Stockhausen, “Structure and Experiential Time,” 64.

find that the piece, [through its development], has become a ten by ten canvas.”<sup>10</sup> I understand Feldman to mean that he develops a sense of scale as something intuitive<sup>11</sup> that emerges through the compositional process, and that when this sense of scale is sufficiently large, then the listener’s perception of time may be altered. Paradoxically, it takes large amounts of time to erase the perception of the passage of time.

To conclude, time is an essential element of music, exemplified in *4’33’’* by John Cage, a piece where the only composed parameter is time. In addition, the perception of time is variable, as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Michael Rofe explain through the analyses of Anton Webern’s compositions. Finally, large-scale structures are necessary to create the illusion of erasing the ability to track time.

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<sup>10</sup> PolymediaTV, “Morton Feldman Interviewed by Charles Shere, July, 1967,” February 26, 2016, Interview Recording, 36:58. <https://youtu.be/OM0cho0XRe4?t=2218>

<sup>11</sup> PolymediaTV, “Morton Feldman Interviewed by Charles Shere, July, 1967,” February 26, 2016, Interview Recording, 36:58. <https://youtu.be/OM0cho0XRe4?t=2218>

### CHAPTER III

#### REFERENCE IN MUSIC

Listening to music is not just about the present time, but also about the past and future.

The music listener continually navigates the temporal domains of past (memory), present (perception) and future (expectation), as musical information unfolds over time, and as mental representations of what is being heard are constructed.<sup>12</sup>

Focusing on what Rofe calls “the temporal domains of the past,” I wanted to include the memory not only of elements within my composition, but also the memory of other pieces heard in the past. Every time a new piece is heard, it is associated with the previous listening experiences of the audience. In this chapter, I will focus on some examples of composers using pre-existing music in their new pieces and their reasons for doing so.

One of the most emblematic examples of music quotation of the twentieth-century is the third movement of Luciano Berio’s (1925–2003) *Sinfonia* (1968). This movement is a musical collage with several quotations of both music and text. Berio uses the third movement *Scherzo* of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony n. 2 as a ground reference. There are also smaller quotations to the work by other composers such as Arnold Schoenberg,

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<sup>12</sup> Rofe, “Dualisms of Time,” 343.

Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, and others. The text for the lyrics also contains quotes of other works by writers such as Samuel Beckett and Claude Levi-Strauss. This piece is a landmark of postmodern music that opened a wider range of possibilities for music quotation.

The Argentinian composer, Gerardo Gandini (1936–2013) used existing materials in his pieces very often, since that was part of his philosophy as a composer. For him, everything had been invented, therefore, as a composer he could reuse (reinvent even) materials from “the imaginary sound museum”<sup>13</sup> made with every existing piece of music. He often used previous music as a starting point for a new piece, whether it was his own music or someone else’s. With his composition *Fantaisie–Impromptu* (1970) for piano and orchestra, he wanted to run away from the clichés of “clusters here and there,”<sup>14</sup> implying that he had an undesired tendency to employ techniques of mid-twentieth century modernist stereotypes of piano music. To avoid that, he started playing Chopin’s music without looking at the score, trying just to remember, and then he modified those ideas in his piece leaving just what he called the “scent” but not actual quotations of his music. Another example is his piano version of *...e sara* (1974) (later turned into an orchestral piece) in which there is a movement called *Preludio Interrumpido* (Interrupted Prelude). This movement is built from a half-remembered quotation of the prelude of J. S. Bach’s Suite for Violoncello no. 1. This is a very well-known motive in popular culture, so a reference like that is quite strong.

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<sup>13</sup> Marta Lambertini, *Gerardo Gandini: Musica-Ficcion* (Madrid: Colección Temas, 2008), 102.

<sup>14</sup> Marta Lambertini, *Gerardo Gandini: Musica-Ficcion* (Madrid: Colección Temas, 2008), 98.

The composer David Felder reuses the same musical material in different pieces quite often. Unlike Gandini, Felder does not reference someone else's music. This is because his motivation is different. He considers that all his pieces are connected together in a larger structure. That is why something that happens in one piece can reappear in a different context. This is one of the characteristic elements of Felder's music.<sup>15</sup>

These examples show different ways in which references have been used by other composers. Memory is always engaged in the act of listening to music, and the connections between known or familiar elements are inevitable. That is why, regardless of the composer's intention, the reappearance of a certain musical material between pieces makes a connection between past and present through memory.

In my composition, through the use of recurring elements of my own past work, I intended to musically portray in a metaphorical way what the narrator is talking about time travel. In the next chapter, I explain in greater detail the structure of *It is. It is not*, and how this process take place.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Parts of a Larger Garment: A Conversation with Composer David Felder," *Fanfare: The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors* 34. No. 1 (2010): 34.

## CHAPTER IV

### *IT IS, IT IS NOT*

In the composition *It is. It is not*, I explored the transformation of musical materials and compositional processes in such a way that makes the experience of the passage of time in music rely on memory and familiarity. This is approached from three main angles: the text, the rhythmic pattern variations, and use of two of my previous compositions, all of which have an impact on the musical form structure. In this chapter, I break down these elements separately to better explain how they were conceived. In the music, all these elements work together and interact with each other. Altogether, all four elements interact to reach out to the metaphor of music as a time machine.

The musical form is determined by the content of the text and the presence of certain rhythmic patterns in the playback track, whilst the musical references to my previous compositions coincide with the moment where the narrator starts to elaborate the idea of going back in time through the recreation of the past, and continues through to the conclusion that remembering is not really time travel.

The text starts from confident statements about the feasibility of traveling through time, conveniently underestimating every word that hints otherwise. This position is gradually transformed by the confrontation with a contradicting viewpoint, where the notion of going back in time is just fiction and all there is left from the past is memory. The content of the text is mirrored in the musical elements of the playback track by the

behavior of certain rhythmic patterns and, of course, the presence of references to my previous compositions.

There are three rhythmic patterns that are transformed to produce altered versions of themselves. The transformation of the rhythmic patterns at the beginning of the playback track is the first hint to the conclusion of the narrator, who realizes that change is the main way in which the passage of time is perceived. These changes are inspired in the idea stated in the text, that the act of remembering changes the perception of the remembered object, and that memory is not precise nor accurate.

For the references to my previous compositions, I used sounds from a recording of *en castellano es lejos* (2018) and compositional procedures and imitations of musical materials from *In 1964* (2019). These references are not direct musical quotes, because the sounds are transformed in various ways, from what they were into something new. As the rhythmic pattern transformations, these changes are based on the idea that nothing comes back from the past intact. However, the references can be identified if the listener is familiar with the original source. This connection was underscored by the performances of both *en castellano es lejos* and *In 1964* in the concert where *It is. It is not* was premiered.

### **Musical Form**

As mentioned above, the musical form of *It is. It is not* is determined by the content of the text, and certain musical elements of the playback track. The details of these two aspects (text and playback track) are explained in the following sections of this

chapter. This section focuses on general characteristics that specifically concern the form, in order to have an overview of the whole composition.

There are three main sections (ABA'), connected by transitions in between. These transitions consist of transformations of three rhythmic patterns overlapped to obscured elements from *en castellano es lejos*. Avoiding sharp edges between the main sections contributes to perceiving the passage of time as a constant flow, rather than fragmented succession of events. These transitions are also due to the gradual development of the content of the text, which goes from one point of view and character to another.

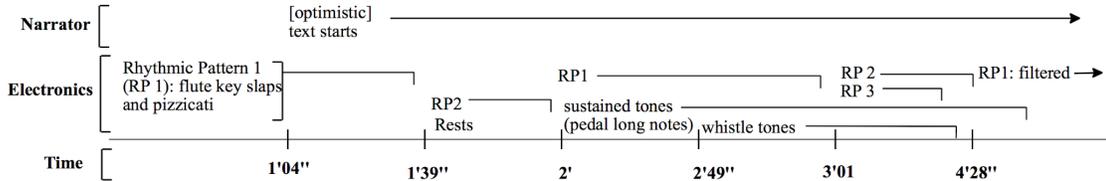
In the first section (A), the narrator is confident and optimistic about the feasibility of traveling in time. The playback track starts only with the rhythmic structures made with flute sounds. In the middle section (B), the narrator has to admit that the possibilities of time travel are hypothetical, as they unsuccessfully try to hold on to at least being able to go back in time, while the playback track contains references to *en castellano es lejos*. In the final section (A'), the narrator has a more introspective tone alternating with stubborn attempts to hold on to their ideas. The playback track gradually becomes a distorted version of the elements of the beginning.

There are sound cues in the playback track that make meaningful connections to the content of the text and the tone of the narrator while providing a guide for the performer to follow the score. Figure 1 shows the structure of the music form in more detail, containing the transitions and some of the most relevant cues.

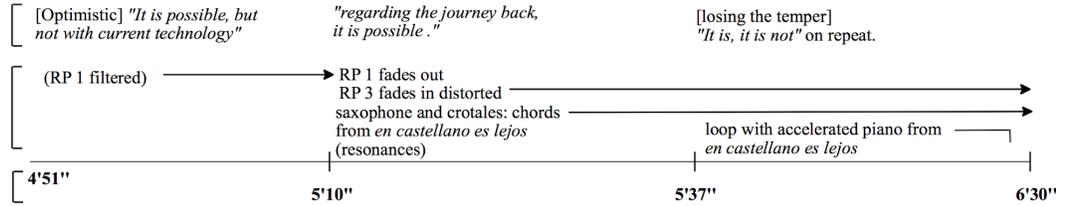
The most obvious engagement of the memory of the listener is the return of musical material from the A section in the A' section. However, other elements link the

characteristics of *It is. It is not* with memory and the perception of the passage of time. I clarify these elements in the following sections of this chapter.

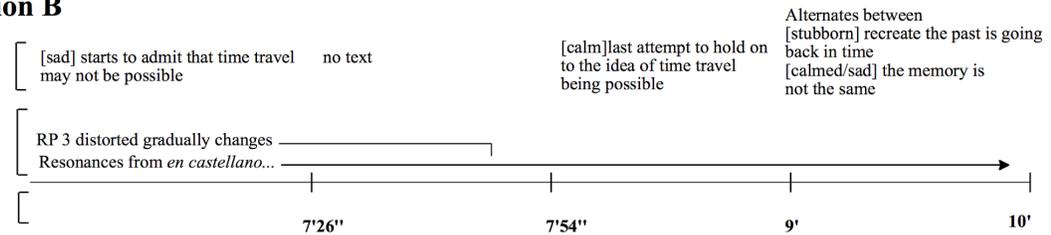
### Section A



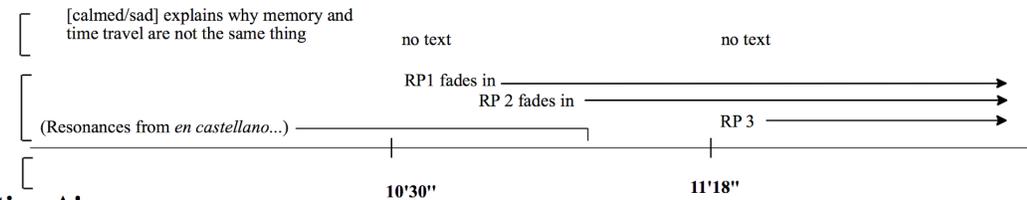
### Transition



### Section B



### Transition



### Section A'

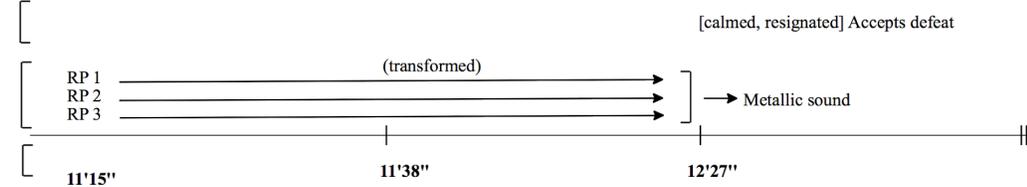


Figure 1. Form of *It is. It is not*

## **Text and Performance**

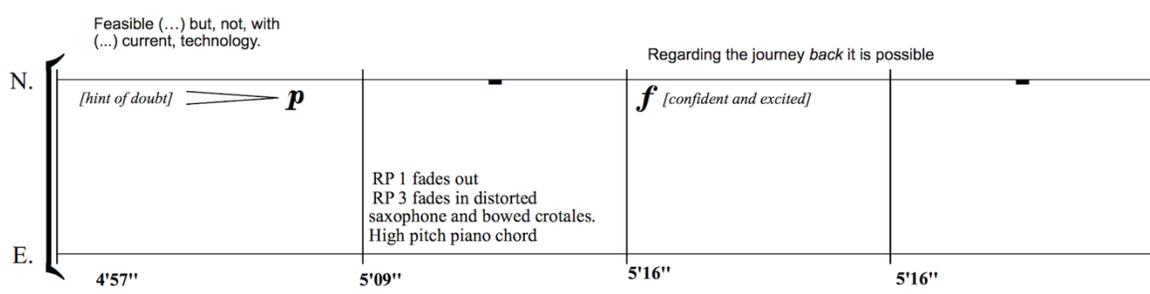
The words for *It is. It is not* is an original text I created at the same time as the composition of the playback track. I started from basic definitions of time travel according to literature and science. I rewrote those definitions in half English, half Spanish with my own words, and by memory. Then, I placed the text in an automated translator and I translated the text back and forth from several languages such as Spanish, French, Japanese, Indonesian, and many others, and finally back to English. From that process of transformation, I created a strongly altered version of the original one. I kept most of those alterations, some of which were subtle changes but others brought new meanings to the message. For instance, the original phrases “time travel” and “forward time travel” became “the journey through time” and “from one time to another time” respectively.

Coinciding with the musical form of the piece, the text has three main significant moments. The first one is an optimistic take about the feasibility of traveling through time. The second is the struggle with a contradicting statement: the possibilities of time travel are hypothetical. And finally, the last moment is an introspective admittance of time being an unstoppable going forward, the future is unknown, and the past exists only in memories.

For the transition between one point of view and another, there are two main resources at stake that complement each other. One of them is the word choice and word placement. The words that entirely change the meaning of a sentence, are purposely stated separately from the sentence to which they belong. For instance, at some point, the

narrator has to say “It is. [long pause] Not. [long pause] Possible to go back in time.”

This bias is emphasized with the dynamics assigned to the “inconvenient words,” which are softer. In addition, the indications of character also change, as shown in the following figure:



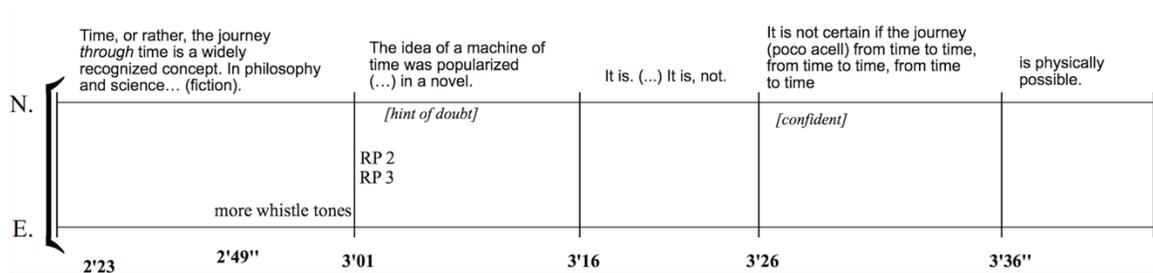
**Figure 2. Score Excerpt from *It is. It is not***

The other resource to develop the transition is performance expressivity. The narrator starts speaking about the issue in a rather neutral way, but as they go along, their bias starts to show. This neutral to optimistic view belongs to the first section of the piece. When it becomes clear the possibilities of time travel are just theoretical, the performance becomes more histrionic going from anxious to melancholic. This leads to the last section, with fewer amounts of text with an alternation between an emphatic and stubborn repetition of a statement of going back in time and side comments in an introspective tone that debunk that statement. Finally, the acceptance of time being an “unstoppable going forward” is sadly pronounced.

The content of the text explicitly states the overwhelming feeling of the passage of time, and how its flow can be understood and perceived in various ways. It also

addresses the notions of past and memory and how the recreation of the past is the closest one can get to going back in time. This is mirrored in music by the recurrence of certain musical materials or the reappearance of traces of an old composition within a new one.

The narrator has a considerable amount of flexibility in the performance. That means that every performance of the piece will be different, and even though this is true for every live performance of music, in the case of *It is. It is not*, these variations are desired and intentional. In figure 3, it is shown some of the freedom that the performer has. The score of *It is. It is not* indicates timing references for short chunks of text, but the precise duration and rhythm of it is up to the performer. In addition, the character indications leave room for the performer to bring their own inflections. This component of variation between performances, relates to the idea of the perception of the passage of time relying on the perception of transformation and change, which is one of the statements present in the text.



**Figure 3. Score Excerpt from *It is. It is not***

To summarize, there are three transformation processes taking place. One of them is the change of the narrator's perspective on the subject of time travel. The second one is the transformation between different performances, which many listeners may not

experience ever if they only hear the composition once. And, finally, the third one is completely hidden, because it relates to the way in which the text was built. The listener is not meant to have access to this starting version of the text, but philosophically is meaningful to understand that there is also a past that cannot be accessed from the present, not even through memory.

### **Rhythmic Patterns**

In addition to the text, sections A and A' of *It is. It is not* are also defined by the presence of different versions of three main rhythmic patterns made with flute key slaps and flute *pizzicati*<sup>16</sup>. These patterns are introduced at the beginning and they are very recognizable because they are intended to be familiar to the listener when they come back at the end of the piece. They are subjected to many kinds of variations but they do not develop into something new, they are just different versions of the same thing. The recurrence at the end also happens in a key moment of the text, after the narrator has compared a recreation of the past with travel back in time, only to conclude that they are not the same thing.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Pizzicato* in flute is an extended technique produced by articulating a laud “p” or “t” sound into the embouchure while fingering a specified pitch.

<sup>17</sup> The recording of the sounds for the three rhythmic patterns, was made without a metronomic reference to increase and preserve human inaccuracy. I find this quality very interesting when an inaccurate pattern is juxtaposed to the perfect precision of a delay effect and computer-generated loops. What locally is an irregularity, becomes a regularity on a larger scale, which relates back to the fixed/flexible opposition of the playback track against the live performance.

**Figure 4. Rhythmic Patterns**

The first rhythmic pattern opens the piece with descending quarter notes melodic cells played with flute *pizzicati*. The second is a single pitch beat also played with flute key slaps. The third one is made with key slaps *glissandi* from D4 to B4 as fast as possible. The beat of the first two materials is purposely imprecise. With this first pattern I created three different kinds of loops. The first loop is a raw repetition of the pattern. The second one, on top of the repetition also has a delay effect. This makes the rhythm of each unit of the loop internally more regular. The third kind of loop is a frequency filtered version of the first two. None of these variations are strong enough to create a new material, for the pattern remains recognizable.

The second pattern is made with eight beats played with a key slap on D. The last beat is shorter than the other beats. The release of the key for the next slaps makes a very soft upbeat, highlighting the difference in length of the last beat. I repeated this pattern seven times slightly increasing the speed in each repetition by one point of a metronomic

mark. By the last repetition of the pattern, the metronomic mark went up by roughly a ten percent, the minimum amount required for tempo change to be noticeable.

The third pattern does not have a precise intelligible metric since the key slaps go as fast as possible. I processed this pattern by digitally changing its speed without going down from the original recording and without going up to point when rhythm becomes pitch.

In the section A', the last one of *It is. It is not*, the three rhythmic patterns gradually come back while the voice slowly disappears. This new version of the beginning is gradually transformed into a looped, distant, and metallic sound, made with the electronically stretched sounds of the main three patterns overlapped. This last process of distortion goes up to the point in which it is highly differentiated from its original version until it fades out completely. This is probably the most drastic change, considering my interest in keeping the identity of each pattern, but since this process is gradual and uninterrupted, on top of the fact that it is the end of the piece, the resulting sound remains attached to the original source.

These three rhythmic patterns are the main element of the first section, and they trigger the listener memory by coming back in the final section. However, this connection between A and A' does not happen without some effort from the listener because of the transformation of the musical material in addition to the overlapped *en castellano es lejos* reference.

## References to Other Compositions

Berio's *Sinfonia* was a significant statement about music quotation that gained great relevance in post-modern music aesthetics. Gandini's philosophy as a composer, not independent from Berio's piece, included the option to borrow any existing musical element in his own music, as a musical quote, or a more abstract inspiration. Felder uses reference as a way of putting his body of work into a globalized context. My own practice is similar to Gandini's in the way it engages transformation inherent in half-remembered elements, and it is also similar to Felder because, in this composition, I explicitly took elements only from my own music.

In the fixed electronic media of *It is. It is not*, there are obscured representations of two of my previous compositions: *en castellano es lejos* (2018), for saxophone, electric guitar, piano, and vibraphone, and *In 1964* (2019), an electroacoustic piece made out of a recording of a deteriorated piano. I chose these compositions because I saw in them elements that fit well with the musical crafting of *It is. It is not*. In the case of *en castellano es lejos*, all the instruments build up the resonances of the piano. That kind of sound crafting, I believe, is reminiscent of the way sounds are synthesized electronically through the manipulation of different parameters. On the other hand, from *In 1964* I took some compositional processes instead of direct sounds, more like paraphrasing rather than quoting.

My intention with these references was to metaphorically portray through music the possibility to going back to the past that the narrator is talking about. However, every reference is altered into something new, which serves as an analogy to the idea of a failed

attempt at going back in time. In order to make the references clearer, *It is. It is not* was premiered in a concert where both *en castellano es lejos* and *In 1964* were previously performed. This was not only to cover the possibility of members of the audience not being familiar with my music, but also to have the fresh memory of it. Later on, I will discuss the impact and ramifications non-familiarity of the referenced works might have in future performances.

The reference to *en castellano es lejos* happens in the middle section of *It is. It is not*, where the narrator talks about “the journey back in time” and ends up realizing the difference between remembering and actually traveling to the past. At that point, I included a full recording of *en castellano...* within the playback track for *It is. It is not*, but isolated from the piano for the most part of it. I transformed the piano independently in two different ways. In one section of the playback recording, I used effects such as delays, pitch-shifters, and filters to expand the timbral possibilities of the piano sound. In another section, I kept most of the piano sound but altered the speed of the music drastically, fitting the entire piano of *en castellano...*, a five-minute long piece, into less than a minute and a half. Even after having heard the piece earlier in the same concert, it is not an obvious reference, and it takes an active listening to trace it back to the original composition.

The reference to *In 1964* is more indirect because I did not use the actual sounds of the piece but rather some of its procedures. *In 1964* was created from recordings of a very deteriorated piano, and then those recordings were altered to make the piano sound unrecognizable. For *It is. It is not*, I recorded flute sounds using some extended

techniques like whistle tones, key slaps, and flute *pizzicati*. Then I processed the sound electronically with a variety of effects to alter the traditional flute sound in the same way I did with the sounds of a piano in *In 1964*. Even though the starting point is very different, the resulting sounds are very similar, and the processes are practically the same. Furthermore, the endings of *In 1964* and *It is. It is not* are intentionally similar. The crescendo of the plucked strings juxtaposed to a metallic “leftover” sound of *In 1964* becomes a crescendo of key slaps juxtaposed to a metallic leftover sound in *It is. It is not*.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

*It is. It is not* delivers a commentary on time travel through musical and textual procedures. The piece explores the transformation of musical materials and the role of memory in listening, to invite the audience to pay attention to their perception of time. The compositional processes I used in the piece transform of three principal elements of the piece: rhythm, text, and my previous music.

The interactions between past, present, and future, that Michael Rofe describes under an Einsteinian model of time, and Karlheinz Stockhausen's concept of "experiential time," are ideas that I consulted while writing this piece. I explored these interactions by taking the role of memory in the act of listening into account.

The text explicitly speaks about the passage of time while trying to argue for the possibilities of time travel. The musical elements of the playback track relate to the narrator's statements and mood. At the end of the piece, the narrator concludes that the passage of time is the perception of change. This statement is evoked in the musical materials through processes of transformation. The memory of the listener is engaged by the presence of recognizable, known elements, like the recurrence of rhythmic patterns in different sections of the piece, and references to some of my other compositions.

In regard to the presence of my past music within *It is. It is not*, I expect the listening experience to be different depending on the listeners familiarity with my work.

In the concert where this composition was premiered, the pieces referenced in *It is not* was performed prior to it, meaning that everyone was familiar with the pre-existing music. In further performances of *It is. It is not* where the audience may not have any familiarity with my music, they would establish new connections based on their personal backgrounds of listening. I find this spectrum of possibilities compelling because it makes me think of how shared experiences may be remembered in different ways by different people. Finally, if people hear *It is. It is not* without any knowledge of my past music, there is a possibility that they will remember the references used in this piece in a future listening of the music that it references.

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## APPENDIX A

### TEXT OF *IT IS. IT IS NOT*

“The journey through time is a concept. It is a concept of movement. The movement between certain points, analogous to the movement between different points in space for an object or... a person. However, in time. From one time to another. This is known as movement. The journey through time is accomplished with the use of a device (hypothetical device) known as “The Machine of Time.” Time or the journey through time is a widely recognized concept. In philosophy and science (fiction). The idea of a machine of time was popularized (in a novel).

It is. It is not. It is. Not certain if the journey from time to time is physically possible. The journey towards time outside the usual sense of the perception of time, is a phenomenon widely understood. And also understood in the framework of special relativity and general relativity. Physics. However, Making a body. Making a body. Making a body progress or delay more than one millisecond compared to another body is feasible! Feasible... but not with... current technology.

Regarding the journey back. It is possible. It is possible! It is. It is. It is... Not. The journey back in time. It is possible to find solutions. It is possible. Solutions in general relativity allow it. It is. It is. It is not. It is possible to find solutions. Solutions in general relativity allow it! But... the... solutions... require conditions that may... that may not... may not be... physically possible.

The journey through time is a concept. It is a concept of change. It is only through change that time goes by. The perception of time is the perception of change. Therefore, if every condition remains the same, time ceases to exist.

To recreate every aspect of a certain point in time it is the journey back in time!  
(But, if the memory of the time of the past aches. If the memory overlaps the recreation of one time on a different time.)

To recreate every aspect of a certain point in time it is the journey back in time!  
(But if the memory of the time of the past aches.)

To recreate every aspect of a certain point in time it is the journey back in time!  
(But it builds nostalgia)

To recreate every aspect of a certain point in time it is the journey back in time!!!  
But if it builds nostalgia the conditions are not the same, hence the journey back becomes a journey forward.

A never ending going ahead to the inevitable, unavoidable, unstoppable.”

## APPENDIX B

### SCORE OF *IT IS. IT IS NOT*

María Lihuen Sirvent  
Mar/2020

#### **Performance Notes**

- The following score is a reference for the performance to follow the playback track.
- The use of a stopwatch is accepted but a memorized performance is preferred.
- The time markings are approximations. Flexibility is allowed but avoid to be off for more than five-second from the provided time marks in the score.
- The narrator can be of any gender.
- The narrator has to start the performance looking like an expert exposing a paper at a conference rather than a singer.
- The voice should be amplified to not be overpowered by the playback track.
- The voice has to be spoken at all times as in natural conversational speech.
- An expressive, histrionic performance is desired but it needs to be realistic. Do not overdo it. It is not opera.

# It it. It is not

Maria Lihuen Sirvent  
(2020)

The journey through time (...) is a concept  
It is a concept of movement (...)  
The movement between certain points,  
analogous to the movement between  
different points in space for an object or (...) a person

Narrator

Electronics

Rhythmic Pattern 1  
(RP 1): flute key slaps  
and pizzicati

*f* [Eloquent, paused, natural]

slap

However, (...) in time.

From one time

1'12" 1'38" 1'44"

The journey through time is accomplished (...) with the use of a device (hypothetical) device... known as "The Machine of Time."

N.

E.

to another

this

is known as...

Movement.

*f*

sustained tones (pedal long notes)

whistle tone

1'39" 1'52" 1'54" 1'57" 2' 2'12 2'23

Time, or rather, the journey through time is a widely recognized concept. In philosophy and science (...) (fiction).

The idea of a machine of time was popularized (...) (in a novel).

It is. (...) It is, not.

It is not certain if the journey (poco acell) from time to time, from time to time, from time to time

is physically possible.

N.

E.

[hint of doubt]

RP 2  
RP 3

more whistle tones

[confident]

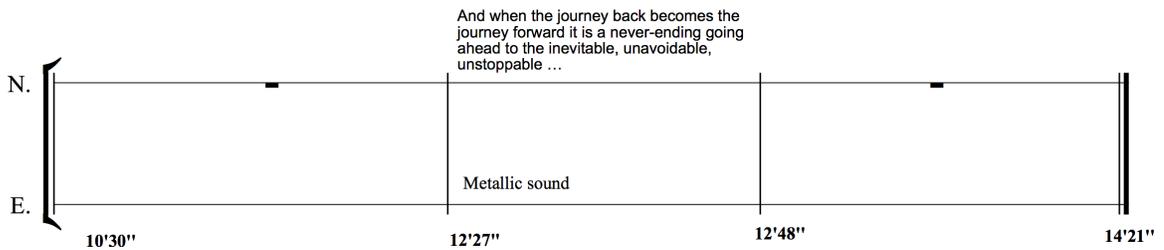
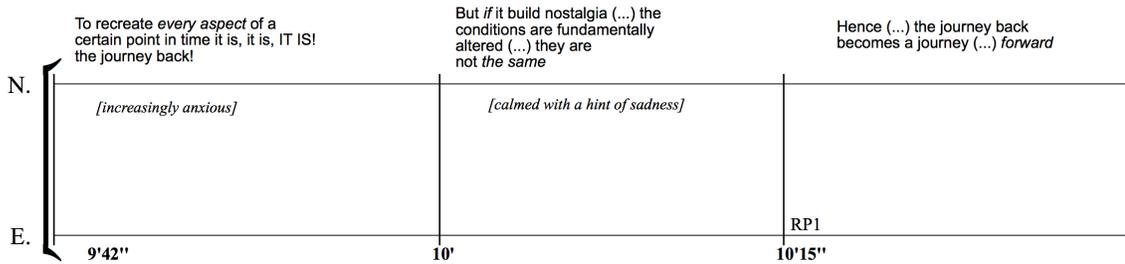
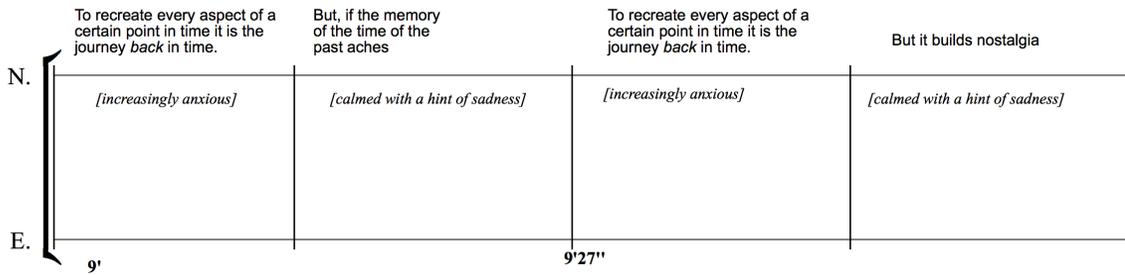
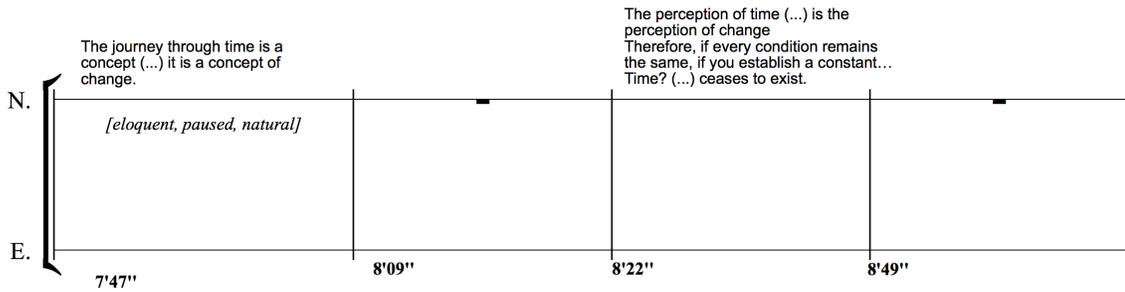
2'23 2'49" 3'01 3'16 3'26 3'36"

	The journey towards time outside the usual sense of the perception of time, is a phenomenon widely understood. (...) And also understood in the framework of special relativity and general relativity (...) Physics.		However (...) Making a body (...) Making a body? (...)	Making a body progress (...) or (...) delay	Making a body progress or delay more than one millisecond compared to another body IS feasible!
N.	[confident and excited]	[cautious]			[confident and excited]
E.	flute descending notes			RP1: filtered	
	3'42"	4'12"		4'28"	4'38"

	Feasible (...) but, not, with (...) current, technology.	Regarding the journey <i>back</i> it is possible		
N.	[hint of doubt] $\Rightarrow$ <b>p</b>		<b>f</b> [confident and excited]	
E.		RP 1 fades out RP 3 fades in distorted saxophone and bowed crotales. High pitch piano chord		
	4'57"	5'09"	5'16"	5'16"

	It is (...) It is possible. It is it is it is. (...) It is, possible. It is. It is. It is. It is not. (...) It is possible to find solutions. It is possible! It is. It is. It is. It is <i>not</i> . It is. It is. It is not. It is. It is. It is. It is possible to find solutions! It is possible! Solutions in general relativity <i>allow</i> for it. It is, it is not!"	It is possible to find solutions. Solutions in general relativity allow for it.
N.	[increasingly anxious]	[eloquent, paused, natural]
E.	piano loop	
	5'37"	6'38"

	But (...)	The (...) solutions (...) require (...) conditions (...) (...) conditions that may (...) may not be (...) physically possible.	
N.	[cautious]		
E.		RP 3 gradually fades out vibraphone, crotales, saxophone	
	6'47"	6'53"	7'15"



## APPENDIX C

### PERFORMANCE OF *IT IS. IT IS NOT*

A performance recording of *It is. It is not* can be found online at the following address:

<https://soundcloud.com/lih-s/it-is-it-is-not>

## APPENDIX D

### PLAYBACK TRACK OF *IT IS. IT IS NOT*

An audio recording of *It is. It is not*'s playback track can be found online at the following address:

<https://soundcloud.com/lih-s/electronic-fixed-media-for-it-is-it-is-not>