

Sonic Crucible Entanglements

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MICK HARDING, Independent artist

1 Program Notes

Sonic Crucible Entanglements is an ongoing ‘new materialist’ (Bennet 2010) investigation of singing bowls that critiques new age narratives (Barnett 2010; Brown 2020) by exploring the ‘spiritual’ potential of inter-cultural material-led collaborations. This live singing bowl performance, also featuring vocal and visual projections, will immerse audiences in an atmospheric cultural encounter combining performance, visuals, sound art and instruments. Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding will present a contextual introduction that explores the experimental approach of the collaboration. The artists acknowledge the Nggunawal and Ngambri peoples, the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. We will introduce light, sound, air and voice as part of our exploration of the vibrancy of materiality. Through the performance of three songs of generosity, knowledge and sharing sung and performed by Mick Harding we embrace Indigenous Research Methods through a combination of traditional and new technologies of sound (Wilson 2008).



Fig. 1. Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding alongside the sonic crucible.

2 Project Description

Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding joins Jordan Lacey and Toby Gifford to reveal entanglements across cultural and artistic practice. Harding is a member of the Taungurung people in Victoria, who draws upon his Aboriginal heritage in his artwork and performances. Lacey and Gifford are musicians, technologists and researchers with international reputations in sound-based research and performance. The sonic crucible performance-installation-sculpture is an automatically rotating silica-quartz singing bowl driven by a bespoke computer system designed by the artistic team. The bowl is lit from underneath giving it an orb like quality. A hydrophone is suspended inside the bowl, which is filled with various measurements of water throughout the performance. The resonant standing waves inside the water transfer through the hydrophone where they are processed by the computer system before

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transmission through an array of adjoining speakers. This allows for the mixing of the effected sounds and natural resonant properties of the bowl. A camera focused on the interface of air and water in the bowl connects to a second laptop with TouchDesigner installed. A number of Harding's original digital prints are mixed with a live image of the singing bowl's standing wave. This emphasizes the comparative dynamism of Harding's vibrant artworks and the bowl's acoustic properties. Wearing a possum-skin cloak, Harding uses voice, movement and clapsticks while immersed in the live projections. During the performance Harding will perform two songs, one of which will be performed twice. The songs, written by Mick Harding and his sons Mitchell and Corey, have a relationship to their country. Harding's voice and clapsticks are accompanied by a contrabass clarinet, which in combination with the bowl resonance creates a spatial array of rich harmonic tones.

3 Performance notes

As a performance-installation the performance can be ongoing. For this iteration, the piece runs for 15-20 minutes and includes three songs performed by Mick Harding. Equipment includes the sonic crucible sculpture measuring at 1.5x0.5x0.5m, two laptops (one each for bowl rotation and TouchDesigner), 3 speakers, a data projector, a video camera, and large screen. One of the performers plays a contrabass clarinet, another clap sticks and the third a metallic singing bowl.

4 Ethical Standards

In earlier iterations of this performance Mick Harding has used smoke to contribute to the work's atmospheric explorations. However, we will not be using smoke in this performance given conference organisers have informed us that the traditional owners of the lands upon which the performance will take place have requested that smoke is not used as part of this performance.

5 References

- [1] J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- [2] R. Barnett, 'Understated Legacies: Uses of Oral History and Tibetan Studies', *Inner Asia*, 12(1): 63-9, 2010.
- [3] C.G. Brown, 'Tibetan Singing Bowls', *American Religion*, 1(2):52-73, 2020.
- [4] S. Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2008.