Beyond Hexagons

ANASTASIA CLARKE, New York University

1. PROGRAM NOTES

Beyond Hexagons, for shard-speakers and computer.

If crystal bowls could speak, what would they say? *Beyond Hexagons* is a performance using the shard-speakers, a musical instrument and playback system created from the shards of broken crystal singing bowls with affixed transducers and resonators. Tracing their lifespans from quartz mines to factories and from scientific laboratories and sound studios, the bowls transmit their origin stories of purpose, function, and pleasure through a unique and alien sonic language that makes heavy use of improvisation, whimsy, and custom software instruments. The result is a sonic exploration of the paradoxes contained in these materials — strength and fragility, acuity and intuition, secrecy and frankness.

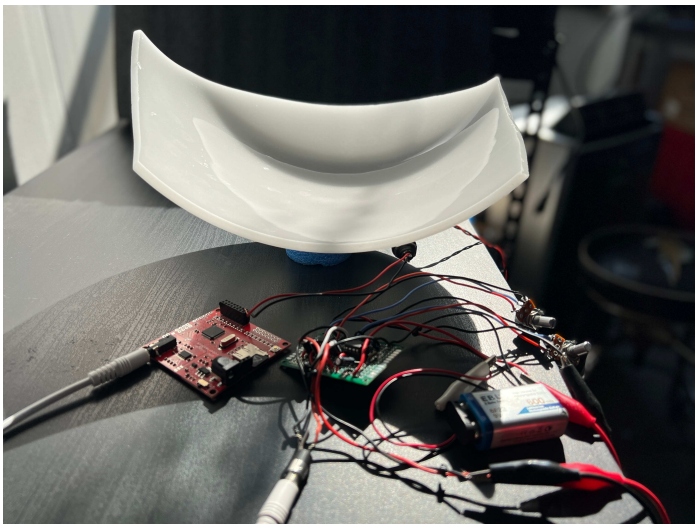

Figure 1. The first shard-speaker in prototype form, 2022.

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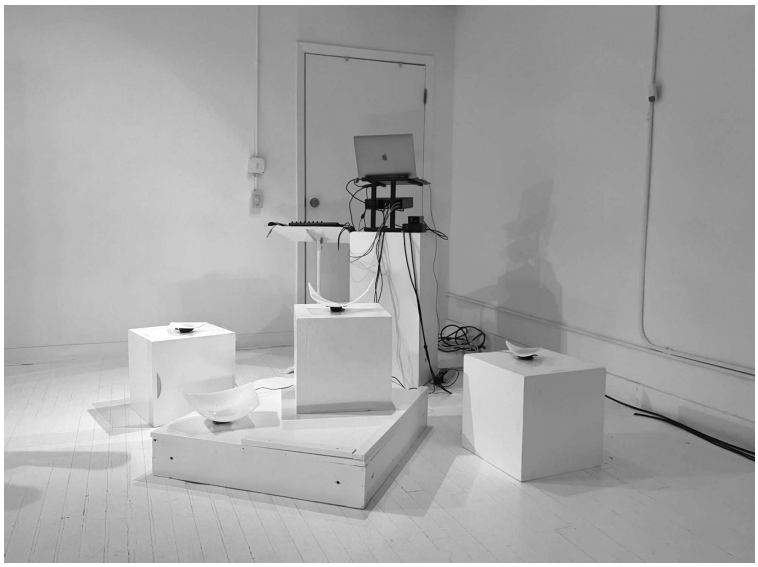

Figure 2. Shard-speakers set up for a performance-installation at TheaterLab, New York City, 2023.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Beyond Hexagons is an electroacoustic performance by composer-performer [name redacted] using a NIME they built in 2022 called the "shard-speakers." The four shard-speakers are created from the remains of broken quartz crystal singing bowls, which rest atop tactile transducers whose flat bottoms adhere to hollow resonators with 3M Dual-Lock tape (similar to velcro). The size/shape of the resonators is not fixed, and is instead responsive to each presentational opportunity (for this performance, resonators would be sourced locally and thriftily in Mexico City to eliminate the need to travel with large items, and in keeping with the conference's theme of Frugal Music Innovation). The performance utilizes both direct signal from electronics, and electronic signals as sent through the shard speakers in performer's internal setup and amplified by the venue's sound reinforcement team.

3. PERFORMANCE NOTES

Technical requirements:

- If performing at a venue with stage*, shards will be placed on resonators in front of performance table and individually miked.
- 6 channels total to mains:
    - Ch 1-2: direct signal from interface panned hard L/R, taken from Focusrite audio interface
    - Ch 3-6: microphone signals panned to reflect stage placement

- Audio output to shard-speakers handled internally by performer using Lepai amplifiers, which are generally placed on floor between performance table and shard-speaker setup
- Stereo stage monitors will be required only if the venue is large.

*Staging notes:

It is possible to perform this work in an alternative location. If performing in a smaller space — or if this project is selected for installation proceedings as well as music proceedings — another option is to give a concert at an installation site, highlighting the shard-speakers' ability to be adapted to a performance-installation format. In this case, the 4-microphone setup suggested above may be scaled down to as few as one, and sound reinforcement (stereo powered speakers, mixer) will need to be brought into the space.

The diagram below is provided to help clarify the physical setup of the piece. Further examples of the techniques / sound worlds for this performance are shown in the performance video link, provided below.

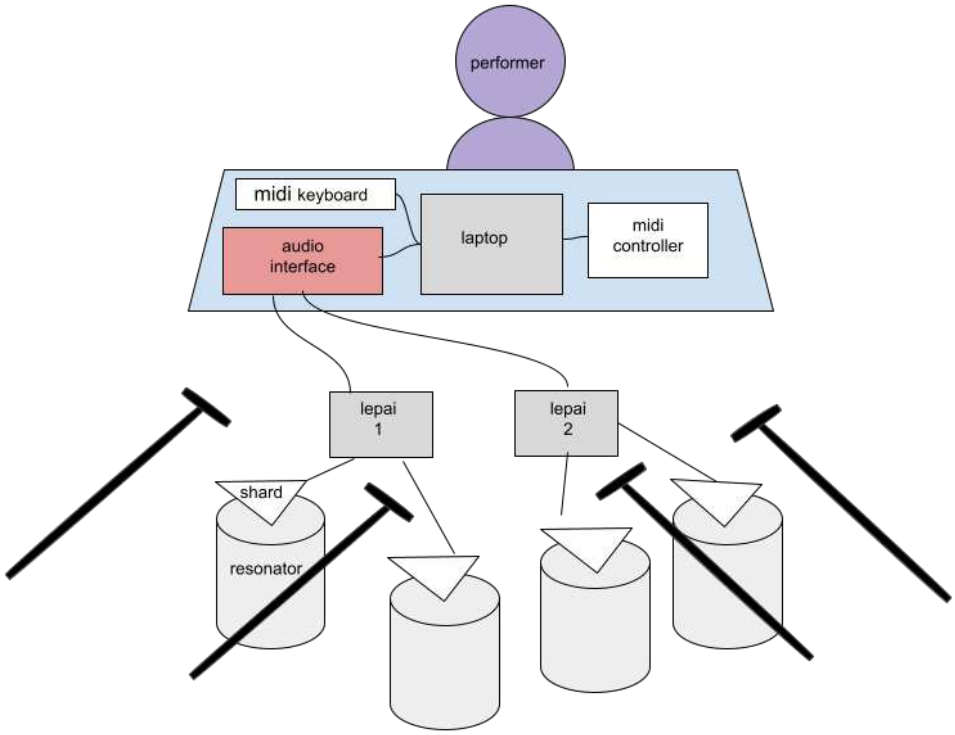

Figure 2. Proposed stage diagram / setup for *Beyond the Hexagon*.

4. MEDIA LINK(S)

- https://anastasiaclarke.info/Shard-Speakers-2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Aspects of this work were developed with the support of a 2022-2023 NYFA/NYSCA Fellowship in music/sound.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

No persons or animals have been harmed by the use of the shards (which, contrary to appearance, are not as sharp as glass). The composer is not aware of any potential conflicts of interest.