

Aaron Foster-Breilyn, Luke Martin, and Jennie Gottschalk
First conversation about co-incidence festival
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JENNIE: I wanted to find out first of all, is there anything that you wanted to touch on first before you forget? I could take things way back or just talk about the previous festival. Do you have an idea of something you definitely want to cover before the memories escape you?

LUKE: That's a good question. Aaron, is there anything in particular?

AARON: No. I have a notepad open next to me, so if anything comes up, I'll just jot it down really quick and then we can circle back, but there's nothing.

LUKE: Yeah. And as we go I think ideas might come up.

JENNIE: Yeah, of course. And we can see what direction it goes. I've got some ideas, but we'll all figure it out in process like the festival.

AARON: Yeah, that's kind of how these things go, right? Experimental interview.

JENNIE: It's the best kind. So just taking it way back, what made you guys decide to do this thing? Like what was the sense of necessity or impulsion for it?

LUKE: Aaron, would you like to take it, or would you like me?

AARON: Sure, I'll do the first one. So the impetus of the festival was just a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the music festivals that both Luke and I had attended, and were attending at the time. That's where we really got to know each other. This dissatisfaction about how things were being done. And then the more we talked, we'd have these conversations: 'Oh, if I were doing it, I would do it like this, or I would do it like this.' And then as we started talking, we realized that not only was our dissatisfaction coming from how we were seeing it being done, but also the opportunities and all the potential that we were seeing wasted. This became very clear as we started to think about it in an experimental music way, as an experimental music piece. We realized that there are all these opportunities for inclusion, for conversation, for relationships, all these things that were so important to us that were just being missed. And so that was kind of the two-fold dissatisfaction that we really wanted to address.

LUKE: Yeah, and to add on to that a little bit, there was a dissatisfaction, then the opportunity that the idea of a festival or residency or whatever is a good idea at its basic level. Fundamentally it's just bringing people together to do a thing. And this happens all the time in various ways, but it's a particularly intense opportunity to make a rather expansive thing which therefore has greater potential than other things. And so we liked this idea, but we didn't like any of the logic of how it was happening.

Basically, it was very hard to find examples of it happening in a way that was satisfying to us or seemed to be interesting to us, and to other people who had similar interests. And part of this maybe is because we didn't know about other happenings or events, which is definitely true. But partially it's because it was true, these are hard to come by. And then you could feel it, a desire not necessarily originating from us, alone. Like when we started talking about it to each other and then talking about it to other people, the interest was definitely there. It was like, just do it. So, we decided to do so. And it connects into both of our practices as composers as well, but that's maybe a separate—

JENNIE: But tell me about that, because that's interesting for sure. You've referred to it as a composition in both instances, I think, so far.

LUKE: Sure. We both come at it in similar ways, but with slightly different backgrounds, which is great. For me, this idea started happening while I was at CalArts and I was talking to Michael (Pisaro) a lot about it, and when we (Aaron and I) first thought about it, we were like, yeah, we should do this, but we didn't have a conception of doing it like a piece, like thinking about it in that context yet. Well, of course we were composing. It was just like turning our head—

JENNIE: You didn't know you were composing yet.

LUKE: Yeah, and that was an important, maybe the most important, growth process personally, and something I'm still working through. I'm actually not really a fan of calling it a 'piece' *per se* because that feels somehow beside the point. Like, who cares? But the idea that composing at its base is putting things together, just the meaning of the word, is one way of looking at it, and that's how I take composing. And that's actually why I like being called a composer, not because it has anything to do with music. Yeah, so then I remember there are two things that happened (this relates to the festival): first talking about it with Michael, and he said something like, 'well, you should really start looking at this like a composition'. And that was a bit of a mindblowing moment, like completely obvious, but a total mindblower. And then I met Joachim (Eckl), who was of course the second Co-Incidence Resident Artist, as you know, and we had this moment where we had an hour long meeting together, and he started talking about how things were interesting socially, and how the composition could happen socially, instead of just music. This was referring to a thing I was putting on at CalArts at the time, and there was some tension among certain artists or whatever that was happening, and he was like, 'why are you mad about that?' or 'why are you unhappy'? And he was like, 'you're thinking about it like an administrator'. And then he says, 'you're not an administrator.' I was like, oh, shit. You're so right. And then it became so interesting, and form took on a whole new dimension. Once I saw that dimension open up, it's like, well, there's no turning back. Anything otherwise is just ignoring too much. And so then Aaron and I immediately were like, oh yeah, this is how we should look at it. Yeah, but Aaron can also talk about—

AARON: Yeah, I think Luke definitely hit on the main point, was there was this moment when there was this kind of realization, and Luke sharing this with me, where I realized that, yeah, it wasn't so much, we weren't organizers. We weren't administrators. We weren't secretaries. There's oftentimes

this kind of like, oh, I've got to put on my secretary hat. I've got to put on my admin hat. I've got to put on my logistics hat, my grant-writing hat, my building the website, all these different kind of things. And then it was like, oh, no, at the base is, you're composing. You're using these different materials to—

JENNIE: You're putting people together.

AARON: Yeah. And so once we kind of had that realization, it started this chain reaction that affected every other decision that we made, and also in a way kind of became the plumb line that we could kind of compare how we should be functioning to how we were doing it. And it really just became a guiding principle for us.

JENNIE: So you're talking now about both experiences, both festivals, right? Sort of seeing how they came into being?

AARON: Yeah.

JENNIE: I thought we'd get to this later but I think it's relevant now. They each behaved differently from the other, but I think that was in part because of— It was both some structural things you set up, but also the openness of each that they took on different shapes. I don't know. I know that's not a question, but was it that you learned something from one and brought to the other, or was it just two different pieces, in a way?

AARON: That's a really good question, and I think that it's a little bit of A, a little bit of B, in a way, because we definitely think of them as— At least I don't want to speak for Luke, necessarily, but I definitely think of them as the same piece. And there are definitely revisions that happen. There are things that we're like, okay, maybe we should move in this direction. But overall, the structure was pretty similar from our end. The composition of it was pretty similar. It's just that in any kind of, I hesitate to use the word 'political' because of the governmental connotations—I mean it in the form of like the movement of body of people, right? So in any kind of political situation where you have all these moving parts with ideas and thoughts and goals and just their ways of being, that inherently, every time, creates something totally new with all different potentials, and then how people respond to those, and then that can move one way, and that kind of free form, again, I hate to use the word rhizomatic because of all the different connotations.

JENNIE: Words with connotations. You can't escape them.

AARON: It's so bad. But that kind of rhizomatic structure, in that the groupings of people inherently take on such different forms, in a way that definitely could be seen as completely different or almost disconnected, but in the way in which we are composing this situation. It actually starts from a pretty similar, almost identical place or mode of being. It's just that when you introduce all these different people and things and ideas.

JENNIE: Yeah, sort of agents.

AARON: Yeah, as soon as you introduce all those agents, the logic of that initial composition demands the freedom and that potential to be followed, with radically wild results.

LUKE: And of course it does inform year to year, right? Traces of last year still can be felt in the logic of our decisions this year, although it does start from a similar point. So you're right. In terms of this idea of revisions or something like that, maybe not necessarily revisions, but these traces that influence logic, moving forward. And they will for year three, too.

JENNIE: I'm sure. The obvious thing for me as far as what was different in the setup or the framework of year two versus year one was the way time was segmented. In year one, it was, somebody had a morning, somebody had an afternoon. There was a planned concert at the end. And you kind of knew when certain things were happening. And the energy changed from one person's thing to another person's thing significantly. And in this, it seemed like a pretty major decision, actually, to not set something like that up. I'm curious about both the reasoning behind that and how you saw that developing over the duration of the second festival, what the results were.

LUKE: Yeah. One way that I was just thinking about it now was, at what point does a crystallization process occur? So in the both festivals we had this initial point at which we started that's the same. But in the first festival, the crystallization of what happened in terms of scheduling and blah blah blah, or like the structure of it, was still determined by what everybody brought, what we got in terms of material to do. But it became crystallized before everybody arrived. The structure was set in a way, but at the same time, Aaron and I were open to decisions made by the group to change the direction of what happened, or of what happens during that festival. But it's a hard thing to do when it crystallizes early, and it's also hard because it's unusual. It's a big decision for anybody to change the direction of a festival. Whereas in the second one, we kind of took our hands off that crystallization process early. I don't know if this makes sense to you, Aaron, and you can adjust what I'm saying, cause I just thought of this. I don't know. It allowed it to kind of have different moments at which things became set and unset. Like later on, like we waited a little bit longer for that to happen. What do you think about that, Aaron?

AARON: I'm interested to— Maybe this isn't the right time in the middle of an interview, but I'm interested to hear—

JENNIE: Go for it.

AARON: I'm interested to hear what your use of the word crystallization, Luke, because for me, Jennie touched on something really important when you used the word goals earlier. I think you used the word goals. Am I remembering correctly?

JENNIE: I'm not sure. I could have.

AARON: But because one of the, a random idea that we had in the festival was giving people the opportunity to write a longer piece. Because that's something that you don't get at the traditional music festival. And so one of the things we thought would be exciting would be to give people this opportunity to do so. Then that, following that logic, implied, to us meant, okay, so we have to have a long concert, and the best way to do that would be this all day Sunday concert, which we ended up doing, and it ended up being 13 or 14 hours. We started at like 6am.

LUKE: Yeah, it was really long. It was great.

AARON: Yeah, it was fantastic, and I felt it was super successful and whatnot. But then kind of backtracking from long pieces, long concert, that means you gotta have rehearsals. And then people seemed to respond, and then all of a sudden we started having to do rehearsals, and then in a limited time, how do you handle that? And then, okay, we've got to give—

JENNIE: Yeah, and divide it equitably.

AARON: Absolutely. And some people went shorter, some people went longer, and that kind of fluidity. But still, there was, I'm going to use Luke's word, there was this crystallization of that process. Because of the logic of one decision to have a long concert at the end, it implied all of those things. And so that's I think what Luke is saying with crystallization, is that this time didn't have, we didn't decide what the final product, the goal, something like that. We let the group decide it while they were there, while the politics of the group were still being negotiated, figured out, played with, changing, while people were gathered in this space. And so that kind of decision-making changing potential existed in a much stronger way. It's still present year one, but it was allowed to form in a little more of an organic way, I think, the second year.

JENNIE: That's really interesting. Because with any decision you make, you're giving up another possibility, too.

LUKE: This is why we must be like Bartleby. Do you—

JENNIE: No.

LUKE: Oh! You gotta read Bartleby by Melville. It's a short story, where he just says, I would prefer not to, to nearly every question that he's asked. This is like one of the foundational books in what I, it's my favorite. I love it.

JENNIE: I gotta read that. Bartleby. I'm just thinking about it, comparing the two. The thing that— You gave up that fluidity in the first case by going for the longer concert. But in the second case, in prioritizing that sort of organic structure of how things would happen in the social and political event, I think possibly what was put in jeopardy was sort of built in— And I don't mean this as a criticism. I'm

just trying to talk it through, but the built in equity among participants, because some people have more presence— And we don't have to include this in the interview that we publish or whatever, but I'm just interested to hear about it, because some people have louder or more insistent voices than others. And the question of how decisions get made, and who's heard becomes really interesting.

AARON: Yeah.

LUKE: Especially in the second festival, trying to make horizontal structures, horizontal political structures.

AARON: Yeah, and for me, that was absolutely terrifying.

JENNIE: Before or during?

AARON: Yes.

JENNIE: All of the above.

AARON: All around. I find that very difficult. But at the same time, I think it really is necessary, and hard, and challenging. But I do feel as if it's important, because in any kind of political structure, you have the loudmouths, the bullies, and that's something that is very real. Now I do mean politics with a uppercase P in terms of governmental in the US at this particular moment. Bullies are loud. And it's really hard to negotiate that, and how do you express an opinion without jeopardizing someone else's? Obviously I'm not saying that anyone in the festival was a bully or anything like that. But there still is that negotiation in the microcosmos of, how do you provide an opportunity for everyone to speak and to be politically active, while not only allowing everyone to speak, but if they don't want to, to have that be a perfectly valid choice. And that, I think, was really hard for me, because I kept wanting to turn to someone, if somebody's quiet, and be like, well what do you think? But at the same time, that is equally as disrespectful to their agency as a political person.

JENNIE: And it's also asserting your authority, in a way.

AARON: Absolutely, absolutely, and that, I really struggled with, because part of politics is participating and then holding back, and how do you respect both while not necessarily allowing the loudest person to dominate?

LUKE: Yeah. I think this is one of the most interesting things about the festival for me, is that, okay, we are setting up a situation that's more or less horizontal in terms of power.

JENNIE: In the second festival.

LUKE: In the second one, sure, and in some ways in the first one too. But definitely eminent in the second one. But there are people with more experience, more authority, and so on. They're more confident.

JENNIE: More sort of at home in the space.

LUKE: Yeah, more comfortable in the space. Even between Aaron and I, I am more comfortable at Washington Street than Aaron is. So there's a variety of factors. I guess now Aaron's a bit comfortable there, having done it a couple times. But there are a variety of factors at play, and I see that as potentially a really productive challenge for people, and myself included, because it has to do with how our inner-selves operate, like how do we build and structure ourselves inside, and how is the logic of the outer external world, how is the logic of capital for instance, replicated inside of us, and how do we challenge that on an inside level, prior or even simultaneous to an external level? So the festival might be able to challenge an external manifestation of the logic of capital. However, it brings up all these questions of how we challenge that inside, in this horizontal structure. So how do you know when to stay back? How do you know when to go in? How do you encourage other people to do stuff without saying, hey, you should talk? And that's just one level of it. It becomes how do you create opportunities for the activation of events to occur? And this goes back to like experimental music, the reason why at least I love it, is that it's creating a situation in which events may or may not happen. And you're okay with events happening or not happening. So that's huge. And this internal, this cultivating of the inner self is I think something that Joachim is very interested in, which kind of makes sense for how the whole festival fit together.

JENNIE: Yeah. I just remember, even in that first session, I think in the morning on I guess Saturday, just feeling like, dammit, I'm talking too much. Jennie, stop talking. I was excited about things and I kept having things to say, and it was like, wait a minute, no, stop. Leave some room. And then figuring, okay, I can go back and talk less. But it's interesting, that sort of, when is that possible? I feel like certain people's quietness or silence meant different things, too.

LUKE: For sure.

JENNIE: Like different people there who were sometimes not as vocal, I felt like it was for different reasons, which is interesting in itself.

LUKE: It's a social energy expressed through sound. That is way cool. This is sound as byproduct of social activity, which is just— I'm really interested in that, and that's when the festival becomes exciting.

JENNIE: For example, Ryoko wasn't always talkative, but she brought a sort of level of experience and everything to it that you felt like she was there, but she was only going to talk if she had something to say. That's just one example. I guess I'm thinking back. With the first festival, there was, I felt it as sort of, because you had the mornings and the afternoons, there was somebody kind of in

charge, sort of, for that period of time. So it was a shifting hierarchy, in a way. But then that sort of came into question and got challenged too.

AARON: To some disagreement sometimes. But yeah, I don't mean to be talking too much, Luke. Feel free to tell me to shut up. But yeah, I think, I do have a little bit of a guttural reaction to the term 'in charge'. That is absolutely a fair criticism, as in something worth critiquing, as opposed to negative. I don't like, again, connotation, right? I'm just harping on this today. I really don't like how criticism is often taken as a negative thing, because being critical is important, and criticizing is just a different form of the word. So absolutely valid critique.

JENNIE: I didn't particularly mean it that way. It was just a comparison between the two.

AARON: Yeah, no no. I mean I think you're thinking critically, and that's great. That's more how I meant it, so again, connotation, right? So I think that something we were working on, at least I was really learning as we did that last year, was how do you have a leader without having someone 'in charge'? Because there were conversations that arose, even just like a workshop, where you would have Amy, for example, was leading a workshop in breath and movement, and a little bit of vocalization. And so in that situation, she was a leader. She was saying, hey, let's do this vocal exercise, and everyone acquiesced and went with that. And so then how do we— But that situation was one everyone agreed to do that she proposed. Everyone said, yeah, sure, sounds great. And everyone knew they had the ability to say no and not show up. But then how is that different than someone being in charge, versus leading? And that was really exciting to see a different kind of manifestation of that, year two to one, and maybe that is the nature of something that is directional, like when you are performing a piece, you know that the time slot of rehearsal has to be goal oriented, because at the end of it, we want to have something, a version of the piece ready to perform, that the composer is happy with, that everyone in the group feels good about and is confident in.

JENNIE: Or at least they know what they're doing.

AARON: Yeah. At least competent.

LUKE: That goal orientedness of the first festival, I think we share this opinion, but that was both of our critiques of the first iteration of it. And yeah, just the focus on having some kind of thing at the end, or whatever, that defined, as Aaron said before, that defined a lot of the things. And it's interesting because, well, you know when you get really into a piece? Like you're composing a piece and you're really into it, and you see all of these things, these opportunities or potentials that you leave open, and then you give it to somebody else or whatever, and it can very clearly orient in one direction, I mean, it is feels very natural, decisions are made, and so on, and there you go. But you're like, no no, look at all these other things that could be! But it still has to do with like, oh, well maybe you shouldn't have oriented it so strongly one direction, and you were kind of blind to that in the composition process, because you were looking at this whole spectrum of things. For us, we saw many, many other manifestations of how year one could have gone, but there was a definite push toward... here's this

concert. It's a huge, open space. And then there's a bunch of really cool pieces that people made, and we want to do those. So yeah, then it led to, okay, we have three more hours for rehearsal of this piece. We should do it and pay attention, which raises a whole other power relationship, which is interesting to look at. But even the idea that, I don't know, two of the pieces could have combined into one happening at the same time, or whatever, would have been nice. That would take away from the idea of having, 'oh, I got my piece played and I have a recording of it in the end'. We hate that.

JENNIE: How much do you hate that?

LUKE: So much!

JENNIE: Aaron, you too?

AARON: I mean, yeah.

LUKE: Maybe, Aaron, clarify. Clarify what I mean?

AARON: For me at least, that was one of the biggest things that we find problematic about the traditional music festival, because it follows the logic of capital. You pay to go. Musicians show up. You get two rehearsals and a performance, and you get your recording back, and then it's just this exchange of capital, of goods and services. You pay. You show up. You get to put the one line on your CV, and you get a recording to submit to the next festival.

JENNIE: Oh. So did you feel like it was putting you a little bit into the thing that you were running from in starting the whole thing? I wouldn't say that, but I hear a little bit of that. Was it heading towards—

LUKE: I don't think it put us there, but it definitely brought it up.

AARON: Yeah. It definitely brought that discussion up. I think we managed to avoid it because of a lot of those, because of the other elements, and the reasons why those decisions were made. So I don't think we fell into that particular pitfall.

JENNIE: No, I don't think so either.

LUKE: And one interesting thing is that, and maybe this is just in retrospect, but that potential of that happening even manifested itself in some ways in the festival, number one. But it also created a situation where everybody could negate it, where you could clearly say, no, I'm not interested in— Like take Sarah's piece, for example, this Twitter piece. How is that documented? It's not.

JENNIE: It kind of is on the Twitter account.

LUKE: Oh yes right. And there's a video of Washington Street. Right, so it's on the Twitter account, but there's no real way that it can be profited off of.

AARON: There's no document of it. I would argue that there is an artifact of it.

JENNIE: Yeah, but not a sounding document, for sure.

AARON: There's no totalizable sum of it, because people were wandering out. People left the space. People came in the space. And as soon as you burst out of the space, how do you document that? How do you take that artifact and re-enter the logic of capital with it?

LUKE: Right, and that's the part, that was perfect, because it created a negation. And even if she wasn't maybe consciously... but, who am I kidding, she was. I think probably Sarah was doing many things at once, and we (the performers) created a negation in the performance, which then allowed for some other space to open, or a mode of other-doing. And that was just, that happening is totally amazing, and should not be understated. So that's a really, really positive thing that came out of it. That happened multiple times throughout, this feeling, that same thing.

JENNIE: Yeah. I remember doing that piece, feeling like, it was just so refreshing, somehow. It was just so different and so other. Not that anything else was negative, but it had such a distinct character and mode of involvement too that it was just like, oh, okay, great.

LUKE: Even Ben's piece had that feeling a little bit, although completely odd in how it happened, but this like just freaking playing a lecture about poetry at you with speakers. Trying to summon ghosts...

JENNIE: Really loud.

LUKE: Really loud at the same time as you reading it and trying— There's this friction in both of those activities that can never be— Like there's no— It's already a document that he's then reappropriating into another. He's taking two of the same forms of document and putting them together, and then whatever might happen out of it. I think this is pretty amazing too.

JENNIE: The other question that comes up with both instances of the festival is agency, and the kind of agency that you exert, individually, the two of you plus the first invited artists, and then what you bring in and what you give up in agency. I'll just give the one example for myself, was in my piece on the opening concert, when I kind of had an idea of when it was [January!], and I wanted people to feel warm and comfortable, and not like they were performing. And I did everything to keep it from being a performance, like turning the living room chairs away from the study, where it's sort of more active. But then there was the one guy who went around playing all the music stands and everything. I was like, dammit. But I realized, I've given up my agency to the point where I need to be okay with that. And I just

raise that as one small example of what happens at a much broader scale with the whole festival, and also when you're inviting people who, I believe you didn't know everybody that you accepted.

LUKE: Personally?

JENNIE: Yeah.

LUKE: Yeah.

AARON: Yeah. I had never met Joachim, which is hilarious. We obviously skyped and had other communication.

LUKE: My fault [laughter].

AARON: But yeah, and I had met Amy at I think two different shows in LA, but every other person was a— I only knew their work through the application. Yeah, it's very, very stressful. And yeah, that agency, terrifying. As an organizer, as the composer, that is terrifying. What about you?

LUKE: I don't know. Agency? Yeah, that's where it all happens.

JENNIE: I mean it sounds like you almost wish people had claimed more of that, in some way, as far as structuring.

LUKE: I think there's always a hope that growth occurs in people. But who am I to say how that growth should happen. So in other words, yes, but no. So yes in the sense that I want people to have a nice time and learn things and do well, all those good things. But then there's the other side, which is me trying to cultivate how my inner-self is structured. Okay, so an initial reaction is, you're coming to a thing. You're giving your time. All these obvious things. And I want you to get something out of it. And then, critiquing that: in my wanting a person to get something, I have a notion in my head of *how* they should get something. And that's dangerous, super dangerous. So realizing that—

JENNIE: Yeah, because you wouldn't even know, in a way.

LUKE: You can't. And any attempt to know for somebody else, that becomes doing something *on the behalf* of another person, as opposed to doing something *with* another person. And that distinction's really important. So then it's saying, well, maybe this person needed to talk this out in this situation and speak for 30 minutes, and that's great. Or maybe they needed to be silent for three days. That's how they will learn. Maybe it will affect them a year from now, or 20 years from now, or whatever. It's all good. Anything I do to define that stands a good chance of ruining potential, and that's not good.

JENNIE: It could even be just setting up a relation between people that operates in the future too.

LUKE: Totally.

JENNIE: That's a very positive outcome that I think really has happened as well. So I guess there's the sense that you talk about not wanting to define what other people could get out of it. But can you each talk for yourselves about what you're getting out of it? It feels like a really personal question. You can skip it.

AARON: My first is like ulcers.

LUKE: That should definitely be in there.

JENNIE: I'll just set it up. Like here's this wild thing you're doing. You've done it twice. You've set something up sort of from a standpoint of how a festival could be, and now here you are after two instances. Where are you now in relation to before you started?

AARON: Yeah, it's a great question, and I don't know if I have a particularly good answer.

JENNIE: I want to hear a bad one too.

AARON: Well you're about to. For me, I guess the more I think about it, and seriously, every day that we're there, first year, year one and year two, I learn more and more about how it's not really a festival. And again, like you said, it's a gathering. Every day I learn a little more about how it really is a composed situation. And I learn that through the things that happen and the things that don't happen, and the conversations that go in a direction that I'm super excited about learning, and then the conversations that I find absolutely benign, and just like, 'okay, we're talking about this. Awesome.' And each one of those, like I think you pointed out in your composition, is an expression of agency. And I feel like every time that something happens, that's an opportunity for me to see it as something that I cannot predict. Essentially, I think what I'm trying to say is that it really is an opportunity for me to learn, and I find that really exciting. It's fun to really be wrong, like really wrong, about things and how I expect them to go. And there's always this pressure as a composer to understand your piece.

LUKE: The worst composers. The worst composers understand.

AARON: Yeah. And I love being wrong, and I love being exposed to these alternate ways of being, to be Wandelweiserian. That's a word.

JENNIE: It kind of is by now, I think.

LUKE: Yeah, I agree.

AARON: But to see other ways of being in the world, and being exposed to those, is really exciting.

JENNIE: I could interpret what you're saying in two different ways, and I think I know which. But one would be sort of like a leak test, where you've got, like the rain's coming in, and you see everything that, all the loopholes. And this whole presidential administration is kind of like a big leak test right now. It's like you see everything that was open to misinterpretation or breakage or whatever. So that's one way of interpreting it, is like here are things that could go differently than planned, and you put enough actors in there, some of that's going to happen. But the other is saying, here's a situation and here's what I can envision about it, but here are these ways it can jut out from what I envision, that you only see in the process. I don't know if that helps at all.

AARON: Yeah. Definitely more of the latter.

JENNIE: In a way it's kind of like the failure is a success. The failure to fully envision the thing. If everything had happened as you envisioned, you might make that the last one. Right?

LUKE: Or it would be totally boring, in a bad way. Dreadfully boring (saying this as somebody who loves being boring and being bored).

JENNIE: But if it had fulfilled your exact expectations. Like this happened and that person did this thing. That's not what it is.

LUKE: Right. And it never can be, and that's really great. It's like the difference between an ideal and a becoming. Yeah, totally. I don't know my answer to that question. You covered a lot of it.

AARON: I feel like I spent three minutes just trying to express one sentence, which of course is only one piece of what I think, so I don't know.

LUKE: Yeah. The learning part is probably a big thing. There's so much more too that's going to be hard to summarize. But one thing related to the learning and the potential and all that is the idea of finding resonances with other people, or ideas, or sounds, or whatever. And so speaking from me as an artist and person coming to this, most of the time with less experience than most of the other people who are there, almost all the time actually, with a few exceptions... The chance to see all these different ways of doing things and to find things to tug at. Joachim kept referring to this little, like a red thread, or some thread that you're pulling at. One thing that is said at this time the resonates somehow at another time, you're like, oh yeah, that's the just slight adjustment I had to make to see how I could pull this thread a little bit further, and how it feeds-back into how I think and how I make stuff or don't make stuff. That's a huge benefit. It's also just a really intense period of getting together with other people who want to explore different ways of doing things, and that's amazing, and rare.

JENNIE: It definitely is.

LUKE: Yeah, so that's a nice feeling. There's a whole tangential— I guess I can go down a rabbit-hole of different ways in which this helps me or makes me happy or blah blah blah.

JENNIE: Just at least poke into the rabbit hole.

LUKE: I could talk about Boston itself as a scene in which, well the experimental music community in Boston, this event is a big thing that happens here (at least for me, not for everyone of course). And so in that way I hope is invigorating to the people here and the town and all of that. And partially, it's whether they choose to allow it to be invigorating or not. But it's there, and it doesn't ruin everything else. It's just an invitation for things to be connected in the town and make it more of a place where people do interesting things. And that's important. As somebody who lives here, and you probably feel this too Jennie, it's important to have things happening, and have a community of people that you can rely on.

JENNIE: That's something that you do during the rest of the year as well, making that happen.

LUKE: Sure, yeah, desperately trying to make this other-doing happen. Lots of other people do that too, of course Non-Event and Mobius and then individual people doing all these shows around. It's great, and it should keep happening, it needs to keep happening. And so anything I can do to help that is a plus, in my opinion.

JENNIE: The thing that I'm finding myself going to is, this is a lot of work for both of you.

LUKE: [laughs] Yeah. Thank you. Not everybody says that. It's nice to hear.

JENNIE: No, but I have some idea that it's a lot of work, and I'm sure I don't know a tenth of the things that have to go on behind the scenes to make it all happen. So just finding that drive in the first place and then keeping that to do this as a recurring annual event, having no idea what's going to happen one year to another. I have a feeling that next year is not going to resemble year one or year two really much more one than the other. I don't know. But it's just this open question. I guess what I'm also leading to is, I don't imagine that either of you would be happy to run this thing solo.

LUKE: [laughs] That would suck.

JENNIE: I'm not asking you to wax poetic about each other, but what does it allow having a co-conspirator? I guess that goes to the question of agency as well. Because if this were one person running a thing, it would be like, I don't know— It's different. It's a different dynamic. And it sounds like that was part of the conception of it too. You kind of arrived at this together.

LUKE: Yeah. I don't know. I wouldn't have the courage to do it as one. So maybe that's the starting point. I am fully aware of how big a task this could be. I mean, not even fully. Well, ok, to start, I was not fully aware of how big this task would be, but I had a sense of how big it might be. And I think I'm still at that point, but I definitely have a clear sense of how big it is in terms of work to make it happen. So yeah, couldn't do that as one. And there's also, I mean, the difference between one and two is big, just like number-wise. To me, having two implies three, four, five, six, and there's an implication of— Aaron, you know numbers better. Do you know what I'm talking about? Difference in one and two (Antoine talks about this really well in his [interview](#) with James Saunders). A solo and a duo. There's a difference there, and I'm not saying it well. Do you know what I'm talking about? Otherwise I'll keep going.

AARON: I think what you're kind of getting at is the idea that if it's one, then decisions are made and it comes from a source, and that is just kind of it, whereas if it's many, even just two, which is literally the lowest many, capital M, Many, that you can do it implies negotiation. And so even when Luke is like, oh, we should do X, and I'm like, you're a genius, let's do it, there is still that negotiation, and that fits into everything about how we run the festival. Was that okay?

LUKE: Perfect.

AARON: Okay, continue.

LUKE: So as an example, uh, this! This was a good example.

AARON: You just saw that happen live!

LUKE: Which is partially the reason why I did it, but because I know that Aaron can explain the difference between one and two better than I can, even though I'm like, oh, this is what I want to say, but Aaron can suss it out more. So that's nice little example of it. Also, having somebody to help in general, there's an enormous amount of work and you gotta share it. We bring different experiences, different abilities, and those combine in a way that's good. At the bottom of it is just the respect for the other person as an artist. It couldn't happen without that, and how I know that talking with Aaron about my work and stuff helps it grow a ton. You have that sense of, oh yeah, this is the right person to do it with. So looking at it more as an artist, as opposed to somebody who's trying to organize and needs to split up duties.

JENNIE: Yeah, which goes back to the earlier point.

AARON: And also for me, kind of jumping off of that too, to the genesis of this, everything, it literally all started with conversations Luke and I were having. I can't even imagine this as either one of us, because from the very beginning, it was conversations between two people.

JENNIE: It was born out of a bridge.

AARON: Hey! 100 percent. It was born in that way, and it has to be that way.

LUKE: Totally.

AARON: It couldn't exist with one person. I can't even fathom any of this without two, without there being conversation and negotiation that is the very heart of every decision, every implication. Everything that we do comes from the politics of two people, the agency that is expressed between people working together. Figuring out something we're interested in and figuring out how to do it and all of that. It has to be two.

LUKE: For me, this applies to many, many, many, many other things.

JENNIE: Like what?

LUKE: Any other thing.

JENNIE: Any other thing. Anything in your experience.

LUKE: Anything. I can't think of a single thing that would not occur in a better way without this discussion starting from many or two, as opposed to one. Politics is the most obvious example. One person in power is bullshit.

JENNIE: Can you imagine if one of you was the king of Co-Incidence?

LUKE: Or the president or whatever. Or the high council or the blah blah blah.

JENNIE: That would be a very different dynamic.

LUKE: Yeah, but it's different.

AARON: And it wouldn't be Co-Incidence. Literally, the title implies.

JENNIE: It would just be Incite.

LUKE: I could see that as a name for a 'new music' festival.

AARON: Incite!

JENNIE: Actually it makes me wonder, how did you come up with the name?

LUKE: Oh, yeah. I was just going to get to that. Well, let's see. The way I remember it, from Manfred Werder, from reading his text, I believe. I'll look it up. I will read it to you. So there's one that's "[The Time of Incidence](#)," but there's definitely another one that's like [Statement on Text Scores number 1](#). Do you know those, what I'm talking about? Text Score Statement One. Here we go. "A beginning of music as beginning which is not yet Music. This beginning happens in an indetermined field where pure incidence may turn into coincidence. (Something) occurs." So then there's this bit down a little bit which says— "Words, a score, a performer, a place, a listener, they all are permanently drifting." I like this idea. "Drifting along, they meet contingently as part of the world's abundance. Meeting contingently, they actualize their potentiality and permanently become what their drift implies." Hell yeah. And, of course, it reminds me of silence and all of these things. Conceptually they're always present. So there you go. Aaron, do you have anything to add on to that?

AARON: No, that's pretty much it. I just remember that as soon as we, I think we had applied for our first grant, or it was the day before we applied to our first grant, it was like coincident festival or something, and then we changed it to Co-Incidence. Yeah, that was the only other funny story. And I'm like, oh no, Luke, we gotta change it, and he's like, crap.

LUKE: Yeah, there's the hyphen in there between Co and Incidence. That's why, it's not a big deal, but that's why we say 'Co'-Incidence, is because it refers to what Manfred was talking about, as opposed to like a coincidence that happens. I think there's the distinction between those two words.

JENNIE: Yeah, it's not just, hey, we all happen to be at Washington Street Art Center at the same time. Let's do something.

AARON: Hey, fancy meeting you here.

JENNIE: Can you imagine, like an accidental festival?

LUKE: Hey, yeah, I'm into that. That does sound also pretty cool. Careful what you wish for.

JENNIE: Is there something else you'd like to touch on? We can follow up too about plans for next year once those are further along.

AARON: I made a note. Just one thing. First off, this is great. It's really fun just to kind of talk about it and whatnot. As you can see, we both have fairly strong passions about certain aspects, so it's just fun to get the opportunity to talk about it. But I guess one of the things that I failed to mention earlier when we were talking about learnings or things that we get out of it, is for me, a sense of community is really important, and something that I really find through this festival and really invigorates me. The experimental music world is a small one. It can feel isolating at times.

JENNIE: Yeah. I would say it's at least fractured.

AARON: Yeah, definitely. It's very easy to allow oneself to become isolated, and I struggle with that. It's work to go to shows and all that kind of stuff, and really work on that. And this festival for me helps be like, oh, here are other really cool, smart people who have a lot of the same questions, and some even have some awesome answers to these things that we all deal with and think about. And even then, so that's one kind of community that I get out of it. But then there's the open nature of the festival, that anyone is open to come, and I really hope that the festival feels like an invitation. And that's, again, going back to agency, that's another thing that I want to keep getting better at, is I want the festival to be something that anyone really feels like they can come at any point, and join and participate and be a part of it. So I want to talk a little bit about that kind of community.

JENNIE: I can say I've definitely felt that. But it was also sort of knowing from the start that it was open like that. But it definitely feels like it's a thing that happens here, where you can go and not have to explain yourself in the sort of initial phases of, I care about this, which counts for a lot. Finding people that are thinking, not necessarily along similar lines, but outside the normal lines, and about sound practice and about whatever it is. It really counts for a lot.

LUKE: Part of it is working to— It's one thing to say something is open— Maybe it can only be accomplished by repeating it again and again, and then demonstrating that it actually happens, that it's open. You're an amazing example of this, Jennie, where you were like, hell yeah, I'll come and join this thing. This is great. And it's a nice feeling. But it's almost like people need to see that example to know it's okay, because we've been told so many times that it's not okay to come and join something, a residency, a festival. So of course there are many, many, many, many, many positives for having you, Jennie, there, and that's one of them. It's not enough for Aaron and I to create this openness. It needs to be wedged open.

JENNIE: I think also having the outdoor events made a big difference this time.

LUKE: Yup, totally. We were interested in that after the first one, actually being external to the gallery.

AARON: Yeah, it's not enough to provide potential. It needs to be activated, in a way. And that's something that obviously as composers, Luke and I can't activate. And of course with the agency, we can't force someone else to activate it.

LUKE: Yeah, it just needs to happen.

AARON: Yeah, it has to happen, and it's super amazing when it does.

LUKE: Yeah. Like you happen to be in Boston, and have this impulse to join, and who knows? Like we could have never predicted that sort of thing happening. We could have guessed, maybe. But yeah, we couldn't have. It would have been different if we said, Jennie, we want you to be here every day for this reason. That would be pretty fucked up, I think.

JENNIE: No, it would just be a somewhat different dynamic.

LUKE: Yeah, and it would create a different logic that follows from it.

JENNIE: Yeah, and I would have said yes or no according to whatever circumstances.

LUKE: Yeah, of course.

JENNIE: I wonder though. I've been thinking about just the element of the public space, the square, having that space in Union Square one day after another after another, because people did start to see it as a thing. And that repetition within a prominent public space near a bus stop, people are like, what the hell is going on here, in a really interesting way. And I'm speculating here, but I wonder if there's a way to possibly build on that next time, and extend an invitation into the Washington Street space over time. I don't know. Cause it's a different thing, sort of a 20-minute outdoor event versus a concert, and if there were people that sort of found it and found their way from it to the other. I think that could have happened in the welcome concert, but I don't think everybody else was, the participants were as acclimated to sort of know how to do that. I'm just thinking aloud. But there's something about the public to semi-public, and people choosing. Because there was quite a range of people who sort of took an interest. Kids, it was great. It was just like, these aren't the people that I would expect to see at an experimental music event, but here they are sort of looking bemused at whatever's going on, or posting on Twitter about it. That was great.

LUKE: I know, the head-wrapping post! [Here](#). The comments are amazing.

JENNIE: That was one that I missed.

LUKE: Yeah, I showed it to my class when they were first getting introduced to who the hell I was. I was like, look at this cool thing I'm doing! And I pulled it up and there's all these comments. And then the class: 'who the hell is this guy? Why is he teaching us?' But yeah, it's a great question, and I think it will be explored next year. One thing that popped into my head was, I know that we've talked a lot about how the festival is presented to people in terms of applications and stuff like that. I don't know if we want to touch on that a little bit? There are a couple basic things, and this goes along with our criticism of tons of other stuff, most other stuff, is that— Well, yeah, it is pretty stupid stuff, obvious things. We don't have an application fee. Things like that, the economics of it. That's a big deal ironically, to not have an application fee. It's an easy thing to do! It's just for some reason a 'thing'. It's just like, why should Aaron and I— I mean, come on. People charging application fees to these sort of things are out of their minds. Bonkers. And then also to have a stipend available for people to come, and it's given to all the artists. We try to find homestays, and this kind of stuff that we try to do to create an opening in the logic of capital and the operation of capitalism, even though, as Aaron knows, we hate to say that word. But I think it makes sense in this case, to actually pry that open.

JENNIE: It's where people are coming from. It's the situation we find ourselves in. But this is something I meant to ask before and I'm glad it came up. Aaron, you and I talked a little bit, I think when we were at the H-Mart eating ramen back sort of mid-festival.

AARON: It was very good.

JENNIE: You liked that ramen?

AARON: I did!

JENNIE: Okay, not the dream ramen but that one.

AARON: Yeah, Dream Ramen not so much.

JENNIE: Okay. I feel vindicated in my food choices. But one thing that we talked about then was the fact that there were more female than male invited participants this year. And it was pretty close last year as well. But I was surprised when you said that that wasn't a conscious decision, but that it was the way things were set up. I guess I'll just set this up. I think I mentioned to both of you the sort of kerfuffle over Gaudeamus and the fact that there were five nominees, all men. And the institutional filters that go into that, that it's generally people coming from a university. It's people who choose to apply, which that maps to both, but there's an application fee that I think is pretty steep, and it's in, just location, sort of cultural positioning of the whole thing, everything. It was a blind process. The judging process was supposedly blind, so they didn't see whether it was a man or a woman applying, but they ended up with five men, and that's not terribly surprising.

AARON: So for us, gender is not one of the things we asked for on the application, but we're not going to pretend that it's blind, because we ask for—

LUKE: Everything, website, blah blah blah.

AARON: Yeah, we ask them, if you want to give it. I don't think website's required. Yeah, it definitely wasn't required, cause I don't have a website, so who am I to judge?

JENNIE: You don't have a website for yourself? What's the matter with you? You build websites.

LUKE: It is horrible for grant applications, cause this dummy doesn't have a website.

AARON: Yeah, it's on my to do list.

JENNIE: Where is it on your to do list? Is it like number 80?

LUKE: It's been there for like years.

AARON: As long as Luke has known me.

JENNIE: I'm going to start hassling you about this.

LUKE: You should. So we had, the people who came, there are more women than men, but the number of applicants, yes, there were more men than women, but it was close, and it was better than the first year, which I think can be analyzed, and that's kind of interesting. But yeah, of course we're conscious of this institutional shittiness that exists. Doing it blind is bullshit, and that's like, people like that, I'm sad that they run things, that they can run a festival or anything. I hesitate to say they shouldn't be allowed to run a festival, but it's too bad because there's not many choices that are other than that, and so there's this feeling, like well I have to do a thing, so then that becomes their option, and so on. Which is part of the hope with this, is that it becomes another option for people, a separate option divorced from the institution. But we didn't go in there being like, we want four women and two men, five women and one, whatever this thing is. We don't have quotas.

AARON: There's no quota.

LUKE: Yeah, that's a bad way of thinking. It wasn't hard. Like we make— So Aaron and I go through the whatever, applicants, separately, and we each have our own way of ranking them or whatever. Then it turns out that on our final top 20 or something, maybe more, there were significantly more women than men.

AARON: By a landslide.

LUKE: Yeah, it was not close. So I thought, wow, great, amazing. But that gets to a point where like, no shit. Like no shit there were more. My initial reaction was just liberal knee-jerk reaction, which has to be heavily, heavily critiqued. It is just obvious, you know? So it's the different more structural things that we do to encourage that to happen, or to— You know, like no application fee, and the stipend to spend time here instead of having to pay for it and having to pay for an application fee, when you already feel like, fuck, I've got my cards stacked against me. So why should I pay \$50 to help an institutional shittiness?

JENNIE: Right, just to further entrench that thing.

LUKE: Right, which feeds back and makes you not have the names and the awards and the blah blah blah and all these things that keeps it the way it is.

JENNIE: I wonder too. This is just me imagining things, but I feel like it's true that the further you get away from institutional structures, the more people feel like they might be part of something, or the less excluded people feel who are women or people of color or whatever it is. These long running sort of white European male classical institutions look a certain way for the most part, where what you're doing doesn't really have that look, I don't think. I mean, in some instances maybe, but not the way you're

doing it. So it's more of a comment than a question, but I think the further you get from the traditional power sectors or cultural landmarks, so to speak, the more possibility there is for inclusion. And you find out that there are people already doing amazing stuff, and you're presenting an opportunity for them to do more of it with other people who are also doing amazing stuff.

AARON: Absolutely. Just one thing I wanted to add there is that— And I agree, and I think being proactive is important. And it's not the kind of proactiveness of quota setting or anything like that, because you're still working in the bad logic when you do that. If you still require an application fee, or you're saying that it's a blind application process and whatnot, you're not helping. You're just trying to appear blameless. You're not helping. You're just pretending you're not part of the problem. Blindness isn't helpful.

LUKE: Ever!

AARON: It's the artificial lack of something. You find that the lack of sight is not better. It's just ignorant of one sense, right? And so if it's a blind application process, whoop-de-doo. All the actual problems still exist. All of the institutional things are still there. You're just trying to appear blameless, and that's not helpful, in my opinion, in my strong opinion.

LUKE: Yeah. It seems so obvious too. And for them, in this example you used, Jennie, of the whatever they're called, Gabalaba.

JENNIE: Gaudeamus. You're like my mom. If she doesn't like things she forgets their names.

LUKE: I hope that makes it into the transcription, Gabalaba. Now I forgot what I was going to say, cause of Gabalaba. Well maybe that's okay. Something about them being idiots, but we can maybe leave it at that.

AARON: I was going to say that this was something that, while it appears kind of obvious in retrospect, at least to me, that we didn't set up the lack of application fee and the stipend because we're like, yeah, we want more women to be involved. We want people to be involved. We want to make this open and inclusive. And then it was when we kind of examined and had this like, oh wow. We just invited more women than men to our thing. And that wasn't ever a value judgement. It was just the natural progression of the logic. And for me at least, that was a really interesting learning that wasn't something that I expected. And then in terms of what I'm doing with my own crap and working on— cause then I kind of would take a step back and look at how co-incidence fits in, and look at these other festivals, and I'm like, well duh: this is your problem. And it's hard not to call bullshit when you look at these festivals, look at these controversies. And you're like, well yeah, it's not that hard. Like come on. It starts with agency and respect, and understand what this isn't about, we need to be thinking about this outside of the capital logic. And as soon as you do that, yeah, inclusion is a good next step. I call bullshit. Like they're not trying.

LUKE: It also goes to, so if we think about composer as a thing that, whatever... At these festivals, undoubtedly there are people who are very good at composing, music, whatever.

JENNIE: You say that like a bad word.

LUKE: Yeah, I do. Composing music-music. And they are very good at working within that logic and making something happen in a certain way and sound a certain way and all this. And it would be maybe possible to change it, to try and operate against that method, but part of it is that they don't want to. That's I think the biggest part, is that, no, they're pretty comfy, so why.

JENNIE: Why rock the boat?

LUKE: Yeah, totally. They're bad composers, in my view, in my way of thinking about composing. They're just bad composers. But the potential is there for that act of composition to be taken in a way that's more of a social composition, that's a little bit more aware of things. I don't know, maybe just cut 'em loose, forget about them. I am attracted to that. Hell, they were never in here in the first place. Anyway, now it also leads us to, and this is the point, like critiques of our own ability to create these opportunities for people to hear about the festival and feel like they want to apply and all this stuff. So it's one thing to say no application fee, you get a stipend. That's a big step.

JENNIE: And so how do you get it to the right groups?

LUKE: Yeah. There's another step there. This is what we're super focused on.

AARON: Many other steps.

LUKE: Yeah, there's many others. But they become even more clear, right? The fact that we sent out a large number of emails to people, and I know, we talked about this, Jennie, but emails to people, like professors at universities. That's great. But that cuts off a large section of the population. We don't send them all there, but a lot of them were. Well, who do we send it to? At this point we're thinking for the next festival, okay, let's consider which universities we send it to, and widen that scope. So to send it to universities that are more dominantly filled with people of color or minorities or women. This would be an obvious thing to do and very easy. Cause if you go on default, you send it to Stanford and University of, whatever, Washington, University of California, University of X.

JENNIE: And only a few of those places really teach much about experimental work anyway.

LUKE: Right, totally. Then there's a change that we'll definitely make, well it was partially was made in previous years, but I think we're going to have a strong move toward this year is publicizing it and sending it to smaller venues. In each city, there's this little contingent of experimental musicians who are doing things. And so sending it to the people who run the venues or who are familiar with the scene, and having them start spreading this idea around. I think that will make a big positive impact, and also really starting to look at communities that are different than the defaults, kind of thing, and just

sending it there and seeing what happens. Cause it's there. Like no fee, stipend, come hang out and be unproductive, unproductive in terms of capital, for 10 days. Fuck yeah.

JENNIE: Yeah. And I'm interested in people who are sort of crossing those kinds of lines, because I feel like it's time for the lines to go, if possible. Unless people want them on that other side. That's different. But from my perspective as not a person of color, it would be nice to break through that. And I started to see that at this conference I just went to. It's related, but there are so many directions all of it can go, and to be open to that.

LUKE: It's important, and it goes back to this thing of like activating a space where things may or may not happen, is that we're not going to define how that— This is obvious, but we don't want to define how that process occurs or whatever. We just want to provide the opportunity or the option for it to potentially occur. That's hard, because you have to break down all this institutional shittiness. Yeah. But it's doable. Maybe it's not that hard.

JENNIE: Well it's hard to make the whole thing happen in the first place. But then expanding it out and letting people know they're invited, that they specifically are invited. There may be ways of doing that or signaling that further. I've had the experience of tending to think that I'm not invited. Even just to be a composer in the first place. It's like, I didn't know that many female composers. Like I didn't know anybody personally, as a high school student. And then I only knew of a couple. I was like, oh, they're just bringing them up because it's women's whatever. It's a token gesture, that's great. Good for them. It's like politically correct. This was my high school perception of being handed a piece by Mendelssohn's sister. I was like, oh, this is actually pretty nice. Not bad for a woman.

LUKE: Yeah, or Clara Schumann or any.

AARON: Oh look, it's ladies' night at the orchestra. Woohoo.

JENNIE: But actually, if I look around now, it would have been absurd to write my book with all male composers, just based on who's out there doing stuff. I would have missed a lot of great work. And then the fact that that's there hopefully makes other women in the field feel that they're more— Yes, there are other women doing this, so why not? Why not move ahead with this? And that sense of invitation that's just by what you see. I've just been thinking about all this.

LUKE: That's really important.

JENNIE: I think you're doing a great job with the whole festival and how you're setting it up. It's kind of fascinating to see how it has played out across the duration of each, and then from the one to the next, too. I started trying to imagine, what would have happened if you'd taken the people from this one and put them in the format of the first one, or the people from the first one and put them in this one? I think certain things would have manifested earlier or later that came up, but probably would still have come up. It's an idle question, because we'll never actually know.

AARON: No, I do think those questions are important.

JENNIE: There are so many variables. Actually, sorry, there's one more question. What made you decide to do— How many days was the first one?

LUKE: Six, seven?

JENNIE: Okay. And the second one?

LUKE: Ten.

JENNIE: What made you take that leap?

LUKE: I think ten was our original goal. If I'm remembering correctly. But we couldn't, timing-wise, scheduling-wise it only worked for a shorter duration in the first one. So as we discovered in the first one, having it condensed into a shorter amount of time puts some pressure. There has to be both idleness and activity allowed for for this festival to work. But yeah, to allow it to grow organically, it needed to be longer.

JENNIE: Yeah. And I think putting those breaks in was really helpful.

AARON: Yeah. It was a little too crucible-y the first year. Definitely not a word, but it did. There was all this potential, and you put it together and stuff does happen, but the gathering and the release. Joachim talked a lot about that.

LUKE: Breathing in and breathing out.

AARON: And that is important, and we really needed both. I think that was something we were aware of year one, but just didn't logistically have the opportunity to do, again, because we set it up a certain way. And this year we were definitely conscious of it and made a choice to change that.

JENNIE: Yeah. I think it was really nice to have the option for these breaks to happen. It wasn't cutting into any one person's time either. That's what made it especially impossible the first year.

[Jennie mentions rage read about [BSO](#)]

AARON: I guess that to me is one of my critiques for that kind of institution [the BSO], is, it's a museum, in a way. It's a musical museum, and it is a museum, and the exhibits are dead white guys. So this is kind of tangential, but to me it's like, I well then why are we challenging that?

JENNIE: Yeah, just do something else. That's not where you're playing.

AARON: Yeah. It's like why are we looking to that to change? It is what it is. And you know what? They play beautifully. If you're into that, that's great. If I want to go look at dead white people paintings, I go to the museum. That's what I'm there for, and it's a successful business model. Bully for them. Why are we expecting change to come from that? And if they were to play a bunch of women's work, what would that change, really?

JENNIE: It would change people for a few women trying to operate in that world. It wouldn't change a damn thing for me.

AARON: Yeah, that's right. It would change how things were particularly operating in that world. But I don't feel as if that is really enacting *change*, because they're writing programs and whatnot for their audience. And that audience is curated. And that to me is one of those institutions where change can't come from that, cause that's top down change. That's like saying, no, we're going to change things by moving in this direction. That's setting those quotas. That's not affecting what the actual problems are.

LUKE: Also, the point about the museum is great, especially in the historical sense. So it has to do with this blindness, again. If an orchestra starts to play marginalized communities or people or whatever, it's a really bad attempt to cover the fact that it's a museum for dead white men. And it's an important part of our history, important not because it's good, but rather important that it happened, and the change needs to come in terms of attention or focus. So that can exist as a crappy little museum that does their crappy, whatever, 'pieces'. They're beautiful I guess (to who?) and blah blah blah, but they exist, and they're like one tiny little atom in the world of all the other cool stuff happening, where change can occur. So yeah, in many ways it's like, okay, great. Keep the BSO playing a bunch of dead old white men, and just like ignore— And I know you can't ignore them, because they are the focus of things, right? And they get the money. So maybe let's steal their money too. Anyway, this is the place where—

JENNIE: Right, that sort of "cultured."

LUKE: Yeah, and that's how people would be influenced, and if you think of a composer, that's what you think of. And that perception and ways of thinking need to change. And I know that that's also the push for, like oh, let's have less white men on this program. And I think that's great. Any less power that they have is a solid step. But the change needs to happen elsewhere (as well).

JENNIE: This goes back to early on, like how you weren't finding something that did what you envisioned. Even the European sort of circuit, there's a kind of pathway where people win certain competitions, and then they get invited as the younger artists in Donaueschingen, and then they're sort of the mid tier where they're getting performed by— So you get these sort of gradations of success, and it's playing into a different system, but it's still a state funded structure. It's still a form of capital or

something, and one thing builds to another, another. And what you're doing here is just a different frame. You're not in the same world at all, and I think that's totally positive.

AARON: I hope so.

JENNIE: I guess the place it comes up the most is just getting the funding to allow it to happen from year to year, and so that you're not depending on people being independently wealthy to participate, or having their own funding. So there still is money involved, but that's work that you both have put in to make that happen and be resourceful about those options without compromising your vision of the whole thing. And so that's another bridge that happens, is getting the resources to make the thing work. First of all, it's the resources of each other, like building the idea, and then the bridge towards making the thing happen. So I'm really happy it does.

LUKE: Me too.

AARON: Absolutely.

LUKE: So maybe it would be good to have at the end of this interview something like, announce the resident artist, cause we're going to announce it maybe in a week, or like next week. (Even though I guess this may come out way later!).

So yeah, our resident artist for next year is: Sarah Pitan! More on that later.