

« Organism: In Turbulence »

Centred around a prepared responsive pipe organ, Organism is an ongoing platform by NAVID NAVAB and GARNET WILLIS for sounding turbulence. A Casavant organ built in 1910 has been brought back to life after being rescued in 2016 from the indifference of gentrification at a heritage church in Sud-Ouest, Montreal. Organism dismantles the far-too-clean tones of the pipe organ—that reductive triumph of modernism over the turbulence of nature—in order to musically engage the natural turbulent materiality hidden within the heart of its sound generating process.

At the very end of his life, quantum pioneer Heisenberg stated: “When I meet God, I’m going to ask him two questions: why relativity? And why turbulence? I really believe he’ll have an answer for the first.” The subtle transition from smooth to turbulent flow remains among nature’s most impenetrable riddles. Turbulent processes of formation pose a fundamental challenge to Western tonality’s desire to predict, control and instrumentalize nature’s wildness. Yet, turbulent phenomena afford us productive ambiguities that compel us to listen via their entangled tendencies, open-process, and wholeness. NAVAB and WILLIS investigate ways in which turbulent thresholds manifest unstable timbers, pluri-temporal textures, and intricate sonic self-organization, and do this by remaining sensitive to subtle material conditions through which turbulent processes render themselves palpable.

The rescued pipes, along with their pneumatic architecture, have been carefully modified to remove imperialist stabilizations which historically aimed to eliminate turbulent flow and its uncontrolled sound world. These chaotic thresholds within the instrument have been made sonically and gesturally responsive, such that tonal determinacy is allowed to bifurcate into inharmonic shimmer and noise. An array of specially fabricated pneumatic chambers and robotics modulate the flow of air into every pipe, unleashing timbers unheard after centuries of sonic repression. Orchestrating turbulent thresholds of process and sound, Organism engages the becoming organism of the organ.

For the occasion of this concert, Organism, still in its infancy, appears on the stage for the very first time, alongside virtuosic NO HAY BANDA performers who have been invited to similarly investigate the sonically alive, turbulent thresholds of their own instruments. Inspired by the inventive tendency of turbulent materiality to defy determinism and control, performers seek not to control sonic turbulence, but rather work in tandem with it as wild and creative collaborators.

- NAVID NAVAB

NAVID NAVAB: concept, composition, programming, technical design, performance, design and fabrication

GARNET WILLIS: design, electronics, engineering, fabrication