

Foad Dizadji-Bahmani, Saun Santipreecha, Luc Trahand

*circa ten to the ninety* (2025)

(two performers, digital chess board, MaxMSP, monitor, speakers)

Conceived by Foad Dizadji-Bahmani, and developed together with Saun Santipreecha and Luc Trahand, *circa ten to the ninety* is an ongoing performance project, the playing of a game of chess that generates a relationally-modular audial composition. The complex and meticulous audial architecture of the project is designed and engineered by Luc Trahand working in MaxMSP and interfacing with a digital chess board. Each piece — king, queen, bishop, knight, rook, pawn — for both sides — white and black — corresponds to a distinct layer drawn from a musical suite and is mapped to specific squares on the board. Rooted in a fascination with chess as a form of creativity and drawing in part from the Surrealists' exploration of chess both as metaphor for, and expression of, the tensions between order and disorder, *chronos* and *kairos*, the conscious and the unconscious, the work emerges with every move played. A dynamic isomorphism between the state of play and the musical suite, shaped by strategy, imagination, and the players' evolving choices, it thereby gives voice to Duchamp's quip that, whilst not all artists are chess players, all chess players are artists. Adding to this fluid interplay of sound and structure, the layers assigned to each piece possess a temporal signature, defined by an inverse linear function of the time remaining on each player's clock. This temporal element infuses the work with a sense of urgency and transformation, as the diminishing time alters the pace and texture of the unfolding composition. Although bound by the rules of chess and starting always in the same high-entropy state, each performance becomes a collaboration by opponents through whose unbounded agency one of circa ten to the ninety audial possibilities is actualized and phenomenological time is expressed. The result is a work where order and chaos, sound and silence, strategy and serendipity converge in an ongoing act of creation.

For the first iteration of the project, Saun Santipreecha composed a musical suite sampling from two sources, electroacoustically-modified: a saxophone and an electric guitar. Various stretched or condensed in time, and taking as inspiration Blake's *Newton* (1795) — the aquamarine fauna and luteofulvous mineralia away from which Newton has turned, and his search, under the pressure of the cold ebullition, through a system of mathematical rules — Santipreecha created a suite that ranges from deep textural resonances to clusters of gamelan-esque ticking. In turn, this also pays homage to the prepared piano compositions of John Cage, whose later work, *Reunion* (1968) serves as this project's parental lineage. A multi-tonal haze intensifies and then slowly dissipates towards a certain audial resolution and final stasis.

Luc Trahand composed the musical suite for the second iteration of *circa ten to the ninety*, which engages with the chess players' relationship with the game and its system. Pursuing the human and the artifice—that which is denominated as artificial—as automorphic structures, it conceptually examines the bidirectional correspondence that we partake in. As we become both cybernetics and ghosts, algorithmic individualism proliferates throughout our socius. This composition aims to highlight the relevance of the notion of Foucault's biopolitics, further decorticated by Mbembe, Han, Haraway, and Agamben. A mutual imitation of voice and machinery, the sounds' spectral fingerprints progressively morph into one-another as the players move through the game.

This project invites future iterations based on different musical suites composed by other artists.