

When I think about *Nine Bells* I think about paths, trajectories, lines. It's not so much about arriving at the bell and hitting it at the right time, (an activity also known as percussion logistics), so much as it is about the traveling between. Literally the steps taken. Walking is famously one of the most difficult things to do on stage. It's also one of the main things I've found myself doing throughout this research project. Somehow opening up my practice of percussion to "the stage" continually led me to the surprisingly complex task of walking. I struggle with it every single time. Walking is both something I have literally done, and it has also occasionally been something of a symbolic gesture, like that of walking away from my instrument (as was the case in *No Say No Way* (Sarhan, 2015) and in *What Noises Remain* (Swendsen/Torrence, 2016)). In Australian Aboriginal culture there is a tradition where a person takes a break from regular work to take a short journey walking in the Australian bush. This is known as going walkabout. This project has at times felt like I've gone walkabout, taking a break from my regular work, to try to live in a wild country that manages to be both foreign and native to me at once.

I like *Nine Bells* because what looks and sounds like a clean process piece, that seems to unfold and behave almost like a machine churning out its predictable results, is constantly disturbed by my humanness and the physical reality of my body. I will never be able to walk these lines as cleanly as the piece's structures appear to demand, nor be as silent as the "rests" in the music appear to suggest.

When I think about lines I think about lineage. When I designed this research project in 2014 I attempted to position it in relation to the lineage of Mauricio Kagel and the tradition of instrumental theatre. Kagel was concerned with the humanness of the musician. He also dreaded technology and the machine. I see the *Institute for Post-Human Performance Practice* relating to this lineage of Kagel, especially with its use of the situation of music as a grounds for making theatre. However, pieces like *Nine Bells* open up another line of thinking. It's one that traces to another kind of performance all together. One that isn't reliant on me being a musician, nor this being a concert, for latent meanings to emerge; one that emphasizes the musician's body through its potential to be choreographed, spatialized, moved. It's also a lineage that is less concerned with notions of medium and expertise; after all, the composer himself was the main performer of *Nine Bells* for years. And this questioning of expertise is certainly where we, contemporary music performers, collectively find ourselves today.

(When I say the word line do you imagine a straight line? One thing about going walkabout is there is normally a return home. But we all know that "home" is never quite the same once one has gone walkabout.)

When I think about lines I also think about knots. If one zooms out and takes the birds-eye view, one will quickly find these walking paths to be an array of loose loops with dangling ends. (*Just one quick snap of the wrists, plus enough tension moving in opposite directions...*) In research it can be tempting to suggest that the methods and results have all moved in the steady consistency of a straight line, following an impenetrable logic that charges forth into the future. But knots are a much more honest image of research. In a knot, multiple lines meet and entangle, and/or one long line meets and crosses itself again and again. And through this entanglement, this meeting of lines, another kind of becoming is possible: not one of clean categories, but rather a mixed-up clump. This research is built of many lineages, pieces, practices, and people who have created lines of thinking and paths of walking, trajectories that seemed at times totally unrelated to each other, but that very often came back around on themselves like a boomerang and got mixed up with other casting lines similarly twisting in the wind. Most of all I kept meeting myself, crossing myself in my own path of walking, again and again.

Feel free to experience this performance sitting, standing, lying down. Feel free to move.

- Jennifer Torrence

Jennifer Torrence, percussionist/performer

Program:

Nine Bells (1978), Tom Johnson (55')

intermission

Institute for Post-Human Performance Practice (2018), Trond Reinholdtsen in collaboration with Jennifer Torrence (55')

Performers: Jennifer Torrence, Trond Reinholdtsen

Light: Tobias Leira (*Nine Bells*)

Technician: Marius Schei Johansen, Ståle Fossheim

Producer: Christopher Straume, Norwegian Academy of Music

Support: Arts Council Norway, Norwegian Artistic Research Programme,
Norwegian Academy of Music