

[illegible]

1. mixed bag	3:19
2. tunes	6:54
3. materials	4:26
4. devices	4:12
5. controls	4:06
6. coda	4:56
7. Ellipsis Rules	4:44
8. Abiding Shapes	10:42
9. Benediction	4:29

47:50

The players marched into the exhibition space in ritual formation, dressed in classical toga-like garb. It was the premiere performance of the *Perfect Nothing Catalog*, at Signal art gallery in Brooklyn in December 2014.

Conrad held aloft a white flag at the front of the pack. What kind

of ritual was this? The musicians placed themselves next to their instruments amidst a scattering of burning candles. As they began to play, their gestures and their sounds became objects on display.

In 2012, Conrad's friend, artist Frank Traynor, who helped don the musicians at the premiere, began exhibiting found objects, redressed by artists, in an abandoned ice shack turned thrift store, which he moved on a truck bed to the backyard of Signal. He called it the *Perfect Nothing Catalog*. Inside you might find one item that looks like another, or looks like it belongs next to another...

The arrangement of objects directs our attention and shapes

our consideration. Does that one mean something to you? Our handling re-objectifies each thing. Electronics sharpen the objectivity of sounds.

We survey the ground for a melody. We scurry around to connect parts into a recognizable whole. And then another. And another. We imagine, anticipate, exaggerate our feelings. Go on. Pick up the pieces, extrapolate a meaning, and then—after it flitters across your mind and flattens in on itself—put it down. Each tune is only an object. Keep going. Change the channel. The static will break the illusion of meaning.

What melody does the texture of Velcro hold... or a resonant sonority... a tightly-voiced cluster... a ringing smack... a whistle in surround-sound... a zipper?

The short scenes of Caryl Churchill's 2012 play *Love and Information* whisked by us with no repeating characters. I sat watching the play with Conrad, trying to make sense of the information, to connect the scenes as they accumulated. Some were only a few words, evocative of a mood, while others explicitly thematized the difficulties of communicating. But why did one scene follow another? I tried to write a collective tune from the texture of each scene, but the shuffling feet of the set changes dissipated into white noise and a black out.

Now we hear what the scampering feet have been saying: repeat, differently. The players gesture through their instruments, which produce sound, which is fingered through electronics, which all together form rhythmic contraptions that create the scene—an ensemble of aural objects unfurling around each other.

Music exposes the undertow of language. Music is *materials* becoming *tunes*, but never completely and always flickering back and forth through our *devices*.

One player speeds up, slows down, takes the lead. We listen for the *controls*, bowing in unison, stomping a possible morse code, humming the melodious yet unclear words of a tune.

Music mediates between the material and symbolic worlds. Whatever we feel standing in their midst is no more than a short circuit between an object and a meaning, a wished-for place in a whole, a place that—for a moment—sticks out as the *coda* of a *mixed bag*.

We are alone. We hear snippets of voices. Sound trails off. *Ellipsis Rules*. The only thing we can do is hit on the keys at our fingertips, sounding the resonance with no clear tune in mind.

Feelings snap players together, extend their gestures, create order. *Abiding Shapes*. Not of meanings but of sound waves, which we can ride, and let the music unfold and the order spread thin... until objects are replayed, reprocessed, and the embroi-

dery feels ever more elastic.

The weave of players and instruments and gestures and sounds becomes a *Benediction*. We hear care and consideration in the ritualistic passing of chords between two friends. Information becomes

love, but only for a moment. We get up to move on. The melody fades. Only then does the object of the gesture emerge again.

—Michael Amico,
14 August 2017











by Nathan Martin



Produced by Aaron Roche and Conrad Winslow. Cadillac Moon Ensemble is Karen Kim, violin, Roberta Michel, flutes, Aminda Asher, cello, and Sean Statser, percussion. The Cadillac Moon Ensemble commission of *The Perfect Nothing Catalog* was made possible by a grant from the American Composers Forum with funds provided by the Jerome Foundation. *The Perfect Nothing Catalog*, *Abiding Shapes*, and *Benediction* were recorded at Figure 8 Recording. *The Perfect Nothing Catalog* and *Abiding Shapes* were engineered by Michael Coleman. *Benediction* was engineered by Shahzad Ismaily. *Ellipsis Rules* was recorded at the NYU James Dolan Music Recording Studio, and it was engineered by Daniel Pasquel. The album was mastered by Sarah Register. Art direction was by Frank Traynor. Album art was designed by Frank Traynor, Christopher William Wegman, and Conrad Winslow. Photo credits: Kim Winslow, Aleks Karjaka, Nathan Martin. Liner notes by Michael Amico.

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