

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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### INTERVIEW #8

Date	23 October 2021	Duration	00:46:11
Interviewer	Principal researcher	Informant	Informant H

Interviewer (00:03): Hello!

Informant (00:05): Hello!

Interviewer (00:06): How's it going?

Informant (00:09): Great. Thanks. And you?

Interviewer (00:10): Good, good. No complaints. It's been a while since we've spoken to each other.

Informant (00:18): Yeah. It has been.

Interviewer (00:22): What have you been up to? Where are you now or [should I say] which year are you in now? I'm a little behind with all that.

Informant (00:30): I'm in third year. It's a bit stressful at the moment, but it's alright.

Interviewer (00:43): That is what happens at this time of year. It's pretty crazy. I've also had a crazy couple of days. I've submitted my first conference article yesterday. I was making amendments to it and because of load shedding, I couldn't finish it in time. I messaged them and [told them] I [needed] another couple [of] hours so I just submitted it this morning instead. It's been rough with this load shedding thing.

Informant (01:19): Yeah, it's so frustrating. Oh, my word. I missed two classes yesterday, just because of load shedding. I need these classes. They're important and we just miss them for fun because of load shedding.

Interviewer (01:48): Oh, well, I suppose we can't dwell on that for too long. It's good to chat to you and see you again. I'm sorry for the confusion with rehearsals. We don't really stop with [them]. So, I just assumed that you would join us again, as usual. I should have just communicated with you about that.

Informant (02:16): It's no problem. [Inaudible] I thought, because I remember you said that you were going to take a break after that other performance we did and then I just didn't think to check when that break was finishing.

Interviewer (02:34): I think we started again in September somewhere. Are you ready to get cracking with this interview?

Informant (03:01): I totally am.

Interviewer (03:04): Cool. Basically, what's going to happen is, there's going to be roughly four [sections of questions]. They're not clearly defined but they might link [together]. Let's see how we go. To make things as comfortable as possible for you, don't be too stressed about your language use. Talk like normally would or like we would in workshops. I want it to be very [relaxed] and conversational. So just keep that in mind. [I'd like] to give you a bit of [context] as to what [I'll be asking you about. I'd like to] hear from you [about] your perspective [in] becoming a member of UPLORc and exploring with live coding and those kinds of things. You can keep that in the back of your mind when I ask you some questions. We're gonna start off with you, because I'm interested in [your background]. It's important for my research to have a good understanding of where people where people come from [in terms of their experiences]. How would you define your musical training [or] background up until this point in your life? What have some of your experiences [been] growing up, learning [about music or] becoming a musician?

Informant (05:02): Well, my parents were very into watching musicals at Monte Casino and so that was my introduction to what I wanted to do. Watching musicals like the Lion King and the Sound of Music and all of those kinds of things. I have always, always loved watching them. When I was a bit younger, 14 or 15, I decided I wanted to learn how to sing. So, I went to a singing teacher, and she didn't really teach me much, but I did love singing. I did like it more. I didn't improve at all, but I did like it more. Then eventually, my friend convinced me to join this school talent show. We sang a duet, and [that's when] I decided I need to go to a proper teacher now. So, my mom found a better teacher. I went to her and she started working really nicely. Then my dad took us to America when I was 15 and we were in New York for three days. We watched some Broadway shows [and one of them was] Aladdin. That was kind of an eye opener for me realising that these things are actually huge. The level of production in these [is] ginormous. Montecasino is awesome, but this runs every day for the entire year. Whereas Monte Casino has one that's chosen every year. I thought, wow, this is actually something that I might be interested in. And so, I carried on learning to sing and I learned piano as well. Just as a thing [on the side]. Eventually, I outgrew that teacher, because she wasn't really qualified. She just sort of sang when she was younger. [Unstable internet connectivity].

Interviewer (07:44): Sorry, can I just interrupt you [really] quick? I'm so sorry. You just paused there for a second. Is it okay if we could switch to Discord instead? I don't know if Zoom is as reliable with your connection.

Informant (08:03): Okay, yeah, we can just do that.

Interviewer (08:04): Should we do that? I'm so sorry. I obviously I have to capture all the audio because I have to transcribe it. If you cut out I can't hear what you say and then kind of messes with the [information I'm trying to gather]. Okay, cool. I'll call you on Discord in two minutes, okay. All right. Okay, that should be fine. Before we got interrupted by this annoying Zoom situation, you were saying that you went to

watch some [Broadway] shows in the US and stuff. Can you carry on from there if you can remember where you were?

Informant (08:51): Totally. While we were in New York, we watched Aladdin on Broadway and that sort of opened my eyes to how big productions could actually be. And so, after that I kind of outgrew my singing teacher, which I think is a normal thing. Everyone sort of outgrows their teacher eventually. I started driving through to Pretoria every second week for singing lessons. I just really loved it. Up until matric I wasn't planning on studying music. I was going to study computer science. I was on the South African team for singing and I went to New York again for a competition. [While we were there] we watched Broadway shows again. We watched Anastasia which was incredible. On the last night my friend and I decided we were not going to go with the other group and [that] we were going to go watch another Broadway show. We were in New York. How can we not watch Broadway? So, we went and watched Wicked, and [it was] just the most incredible show I have ever seen. I decided, while we were watching it, that I wanted to do music and not computer science.

Interviewer (10:29): Amazing.

Informant (10:30): Yeah, I loved it. Absolutely incredible. And so, I applied for classical singing because I thought that's the closest to musical theatre we're going to get where I was. Classical singing and technique are good to know and it's a good thing to build off of. I showed up at varsity, never really knowing what classical music was. I didn't know what opera was really. I [had] heard of it. I'd never listened to it and was never even interested. We started history in the Baroque era and eventually, we got on to Monteverdi who composed L'Orfeo. Listening to that changed my entire perspective of what I want my life to be. The singers have two concerts a year where all of [us] sing for our parents. At that first one we did in first year; I was listening to the recording my mom made on the way back [home]. I was blown away, because I sounded like a classical singer. I was like, oh, my gosh, look at

this. That was when my dreams became what they are now. Being a classical singer and singing. That's the story of my music life.

Interviewer (12:17): That's was a very good summary of your experiences. I'm quite impressed that you managed to sum that up in such a short amount of time. I think we have covered [your background] pretty well. I don't really want to get into much more than you already did. You kind of covered all bases, which is really efficient, I might add. [For] the next question, we're getting a bit more into the early days of UPLOrchestra. Do you remember when you joined for the first time? Do you remember when that was?

Informant (13:39): Yes, it was at the beginning of last year. When we were still on campus. Actually, no. It was just after campus closed. We [struggled] to meet all at the same time. You, [another member, and myself]. Eventually, we organized so that you met with [us] separately. That was the first time I [joined] UPLOrchestra.

Informant (14:22): If you can remember that far back, [what were] some of [your] first impressions of live coding? You mentioned earlier that you wanted to study computer science. Were there some connections for you in that way.

Interviewer (14:50): I think a lot of the structures or how we structure the code [is something that comes up for me]. I remember [one of] my first thoughts, after looking at the [introductory] PDF that you sent us was, oh my gosh this is literally coding. I didn't realise that's what it was. [Our lecturer] just [asked if we] would like to join the laptop orchestra. I thought that [it sounded] cool. I didn't actually know what [it was] and I didn't know anything about it. My first impression was, oh my word, this is literally coding.

Interviewer (15:33): That's cool. It's interesting how you didn't even really know what it was about, yet you were still interested in exploring what this laptop orchestra thing is, right?

Informant (15:49): Yeah, I remember talking to [another music student] about it in first year, because I think [they] did it in [my] first year. [They were] saying [that I] should just join. I just was too shy and I didn't really know people. I was worried, because I didn't really have friends [in the group]. I didn't want to join and be all awkward and stuff. So then, last year, when [our lecturer] mentioned it again, I [realised] that's what [the other music student] was talking about. Then I just joined.

Interviewer (16:41): Some of my questions I can't ask, because you already answered them, which is nice. That means that I could go into more in depth [questions] with you, which is really interesting and really cool. Let's jump a bit to the [technology] that we use: TidalCycles, MiniTidal and Estuary. Can you reflect on what some of your experiences were when we first started getting to know the environment together? Were there things that were easy, [possibly thinking that you] I get what [the code] does, [or] were there things that [were] maybe not so clear for you?

Informant (17:44): Yeah, there were a few. A lot of it was very straightforward. It was very much like, you type this and I know exactly what's going to happen, right. Some of the descriptions that I read on that [TidalCycles Reference] document that you sent us, felt like you had to already understand the program to understand the descriptions. I didn't understand a lot of the stuff until we started doing those workshops. That helped a lot more because then [I started] understanding what functions would do and what specific things interacted with the sound [sample] that I typed. In the beginning, it was quite a mixture of confusion because I didn't understand, [but] then [there was] also familiarity because it was very similar to coding or [writing] programs. It was it was quite weird.

Interviewer (18:59): That's interesting. I'm really glad that, even though it wasn't completely clear for you, you were still able to manage [and] navigate your way through it. That's a really important skill, I suppose. To learn to adapt to the situation, right?

Informant (19:41): Sorry. Did you ask a question there... [inaudible]?

Interviewer (19:35): I don't know what's going on with this internet. It's quite bad. Let me try that again. Do you think that, in a more general sense, live coding has benefited you in any way as a musician?

Informant (20:02): Yes. I think I mentioned to you when I started, that I was very uncomfortable with improvising, and with not knowing exactly what I was going to do next. I've found that, that kind of insecurity around improvising, hinders a lot of other things that aren't improvising. I didn't realize that until I started being more comfortable with the whole idea of [improvisation]. When you're performing [and] when you're sight reading you're basically improvising, because you're improvising all of the dynamics, all of the musicality, and all of that stuff. When you're literally improvising because you forgot something [or] you forgot the next part, you just play random things until to get to the next part you remember. It helped so much in being comfortable improvising. I think UPLorc helped so much with that aspect of music, because I was very uncomfortable with it in the beginning.

Interviewer (21:24): Well, I'm glad to hear that that has changed for you in that way. It's really nice to hear you experienced that progression.

Informant (21:44): Another thing that I really enjoy is being able to take a break from the very rigid classical music that I am involved in. I love it. It is a great thing to listen to, and to play, but it's nice to have a break [from classical music] with music that I think it's so different. The [music] that we do in UPLorc is so different to the things that I sing and things that I play on piano and viola. [The music we make is] not the stuff that I don't really enjoy. They're not things that annoy me. I see it as a break from the classical music.

Informant (22:33): Yeah, absolutely. Speaking of the, I wouldn't say the kind of music that we play because it can, as you know, shift within seconds because of what someone has done. Are there things that run through your mind [where] you think, oh, I need to,

pay more attention to this, or I need to do that. Is there something specific that you can recall when [we're] live coding or when you're in that zone?

Informant (23:22): Sorry, I didn't really catch a lot of your sentence.

Interviewer (23:26): Oh, my word. Why does that keep happening? I'm going to try again. Could you perhaps walk me through some of the things that you think about when we live code together [as an ensemble]?

Informant (23:53): A lot of what I think about is how I can make my thing sort of work. A lot of times, some people will do one thing and then my whole thing just no longer works, because now it's just sounding awful together. Then I have to quickly try and think of something else. A lot of the times I think now it sounds bad. How do I change this? How do I fix this? That's kind of what I think, most of the time, during the rehearsals and performances.

Interviewer (24:46): What do you think you'd still like to explore as a member of UPLorc. Do you think there's still a lot that we can do together in the next a year or so, because you'll be done by then?

Informant (25:09): Uhm, sorry. What was the question?

Interviewer (25:15): No worries. I was just saying that. Do you think that there's-- I've lost my train of thought now. Wait, let me ask a different question. Oh, wow. Okay. It doesn't feel like I have all the questions. It feels like you've answered all of them. I don't know, if you've been a part of this part of the stuff that we've been doing. Do you recall anything about collective strategies in the past few months that we've been talking about?

Informant (25:53): I don't remember much. I usually reread emails before examinations and it's been a while since that's happened. I haven't been to rehearsals in a very long time so I



don't know what it's sounding like at the moment. But I think a lot of the things that that I had issue with was the dynamics, where someone would play something too softly or too loud. Then I'd feel like that's really shifting the whole vibe of the music. It's changing. Now everyone has to make their music louder or softer or whatever. When I was there very long ago, perhaps a month ago, I thought we needed to work on dynamics and [developing a sense of] each other's dynamics. I don't know [about what it's like] now.

Interviewer (27:16): That's a great answer. I'm really glad you brought that up because it sparked a lot thoughts about what you just said. Some of the things you said has really helped me gauge where we [are] heading as a group. Going forward we [might] want to expand the technology that we use to not limit ourselves to music only. There's a whole visual element that I feel like we're missing out on with Estuary. And so, one of the other members, is going to start learning how to do that. [Then we'll] have a visual artist as well.

Informant (28:22): That will be really, really cool.

Interviewer (28:24): Yeah, I think it will be really awesome. As an ending off question, or there's actually two questions. My second last question to you is, in your own words, what do you think—No. That's the wrong question. Technical stuff is throwing me off my game by the way. Okay, I'm going to try that again. What has being a member of UPLOrc meant to you?

Informant (29:04): So, the question was what has being a member of UPLOrc meant to me?

Interviewer (29:10): Yes.

Informant (29:12): Okay. Cool, but I did hear it correct?

Interviewer (29:15): Yes

Informant (29:17): I don't think that this is going to be the greatest answer.

Interviewer (29:29): Don't worry about that.

Informant (29:31): It felt like it was my relief from classical music. Like I said, I love it so much but I do need some time where I'm not just focusing on Bach's 15<sup>th</sup> Sinfonia. I can't do that all the time. For me, [being a part of UPLorc] was really just a way to create music that wasn't classical.

Interviewer (30:06): Right. I get that. I don't think you need to worry about your answer. I think it's a great answer. My last question [relates] to me, because I am the person instructing everyone in the ensemble, and I need to know [about] this [type of] stuff from [the members]. I want you to be completely honest. How did you experience my instruction as a member of UPLorc? I'd really like to hear how you found the content I was presenting to you, and whether you thought there was anything I could improve on.

Informant (30:56): In the beginning, I think that you were also learning alongside us. I was quite confused a lot of the time. Though now, I feel like you have grasped it better so you can teach it better. If that makes sense. You can help us a lot easier, [and with] more confidence. At the beginning you were learning as well and now I think you're much better at explaining what you mean.

Interviewer (31:45): That's cool. Thank you, that really means a lot to me. I definitely feel like that's something I struggled with so I'm really happy to hear that I've progressed so much in such a short time. I really appreciate that. Look, it's obviously [the case that] we still [have] some ways to go, and that's cool. I want to try and have this project be as collaborative as possible moving forward and [to have] input from everyone, where possible. I'll see you next week for rehearsal, hoping that we don't have loadshedding. Thank you so much.

Informant (32:40): It's no problem.

Interviewer (32:42): I really appreciate your, and everyone else's, input. I think we have lots to be excited about as an ensemble.

Informant (32:51): It's no problem. Have an incredible week.

Interviewer (32:54): Thank you. Same to you, and all the best with exams.

Informant (32:57): Thank you.

Interviewer (32:58): All right. Cheerio.

**\*\* END OF INTERVIEW \*\***