

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW #6

Date	20 October 2021	Duration	00:35:52
Interviewer	Principal researcher	Informant	Informant F
Notes	Due to a technical malfunction, the interviewer's audio was not captured correctly. Questions that were asked were correlated with the interview guide.		

Informant (00:16): Hello!

Interviewer (00:18): How are you?

Informant (00:21): I'm good. Just, it's crunch time.

Interviewer (00:25): When do your exams start?

Informant (00:29): The 27th we finish with classes. So, the week after that, yeah. I only have my voice exam on the 13th of December.

Interviewer (00:52): Wow, that's so late in the year. That's so strange. Anyway, let's get into the interview. My goal for this interview is to understand your experiences as a member of UPLorc. There are a few parts to the interview, but we'll start with your background in music. As a starting point, can you tell me a little about yourself, your interests, specifically with regards to music.

Informant (01:49): So I've been doing music for 10 years. It started only with voice, and then in 10th grade, I started a bit of piano. I did some external exams, [but] I didn't get far. It got a bit difficult. [For] voice I also did external exams. Obviously, you need high grades to get into varsity. It was in grade 11 when I kind of started getting an interest in recording stuff, but our school didn't really have that section of music. Where I come from it's not as popular. So, when I got to varsity, and I saw that music

technology was actually something I could go into, I got really excited. That is why I then chose to start music tech this year. It's obviously difficult because I've never done something like that before. I remember with our tutor session where you spoke about UPLorc and the first thought that came [into] my head was oh, I need to do this. This sounds so cool. I wanted to go into computer stuff, because I enjoy playing games and everything, but I actually wanted to go into music a lot more than computer[s]. When I saw that there was an option of doing both of these things in one, it was so cool. That's how I kind of developed an interest for music tech songs and tech-y songs - I don't know really, what to call it.

Interviewer (04:06): Which year were you born in?

Informant (04:09): 2001.

Interviewer (04:11): Okay, I see. I'm just trying to think of what happened during that time as some sort of measure. With regard to your musical training thus far, what is your main instrument? I know you mentioned piano and that you stopped to pursue voice instead. Have you then been doing classical or jazz voice?

Informant (04:55): Jazz voice.

Interviewer (04:57): Okay, cool. Would you define yourself as a performer?

Informant (05:21): Like I said, I did a lot of external exams which I enjoyed, but I've never wanted to be a performer. The stage is not made for me in terms of performing. I enjoy it, [but] I actually enjoy more musical type stuff. Jazz was also definitely something new because I did my classical stuff. [It] was a whole new experience when I started.

Interviewer (06:24): Was there a particular reason why you chose jazz voice?

Informant (06:27): Yeah, it's mainly because it's the instrument I was highly skilled in. My piano was only on a grade five standard, and jazz on a piano just stresses me out because of improv and everything.

Interviewer (07:24): How would you describe yourself as a musician? I know you said you don't really see yourself as a performer, but is there something else you perhaps could see yourself doing?

Informant (07:39): Definitely the music business field. That's the other option I have. The main goal, one day, is to open my own production company. I think business is really important when it comes to that. We only did a small section of it in high school, but I found it really interesting. I always thought about composing, but it's difficult and research is just not for me. Also, music education. I think that is important for everyone. Definitely music business and music education.

Interviewer (08:39): So, definitely not a composer or a performer?

Informant (08:45): Oh no.

Interviewer (08:49): Why? What makes you say so?

Informant (08:51): I like performing, I also don't have stage fright or anything, but I don't think I'm a performer in terms of jazz. It just stresses me out too much. Normal pop music or any other genre of music [is fine]. It's mainly the improvising, because I just always doubt myself.

Interviewer (09:30): Is improvising quite hard for you?

Informant (09:35): Yeah.

Interviewer (09:36): Coming from a classical background, it must have been quite a shift for you?

Informant (09:50): I think it definitely was but also not. Beginning from first year, even though you didn't do jazz before, the lecturers really help you with technique and everything. They tell you you can't listen to any other music than jazz and that's difficult.

Interviewer (10:21): What were some of your expectations coming into UPLOrchestra as a new member?

Informant (10:43): I honestly don't know. [A] laptop orchestra sounds so cool, but I think that it was all coding, if I can say that. I've listened to music technology stuff before, but I can't really say that I expected something. I just thought it would be really cool.

Interviewer (11:23): Okay cool. What was your first impression of live coding? Had you heard about it before?

Informant (11:38): I knew coding was a thing, but not in terms of music. So when I first heard about it I found it quite cool because I did have an interest in computers overall and gaming music.

Interviewer (11:55): Was there anything specific about live coding that interested you or that you were drawn to?

Informant (12:07): Before joining or at the moment?

Interviewer (12:13): Before you joined.

Informant (12:18): I think just the sounds of it because obviously it's not like regular music. It's a bit more unique and I've always liked that type of music. I remember one of my friends in our first year - she was in [the] foundation [programme] - played us something Dr. Warrington played to them in and I was like wow that's quite interesting. But I wouldn't say that there was something specific that drew me to it.

Interviewer (13:08): Do you remember what went through your mind when you saw TidalCycles code for the first time?

Informant (13:23): I thought well, what type of mathematical stuff is happening here? I was like I'm never gonna be able to do this. Especially memorizing all of the code. This is a lot, but I think I've gotten used to it.

Interviewer (13:59): What were come of your impressions of what you heard when you first became familiar with how Tidal works?

Informant (14:14): I remember when I first joined we were still on - not Discord - what was the other thing before Discord?

Interviewer (14:22): Slack.

Informant (14:23): Yeah, I remember like scrolling through a lot of the stuff that you've done already, and I saw one of SuperContinent's YouTube links. I remember the first few minutes sounded, I don't really know how to explain it, but it sounded like anime. Music you'll [hear] in anime. Other than that, I really don't know.

Interviewer (15:07): Considering you have struggled with improvising in the past, would you say that being a member of UPLorc has improved your improvisation skills?

Informant (15:39): Yeah, I would definitely say that. At this point, it doesn't feel like UPLorc, on its own, doesn't feel like improvising at all. It's like I notice stuff and I can just apply it and just play around with everything and experiment. So it obviously is like an improvisational thing, but I think I've come to that point where [I] just try something new today. Instead of having that word stuck in my head, [I know] I need to do something way different today.

- Interviewer (16:24): Great. So now we're going to go a bit more in-depth into live coding. What about live coding with TidalCycles do you find most challenging?
- Informant (16:52): I think it happened today as well with the roulette. When patterns get really complicated, it gets intimidating, and it's like I don't know where I am. I think that is the only thing that I struggle with, other than sitting down and actually going through and watching other performances. Also, expanding my own patterns. I feel like I've improved a bit more after that session we had in recess you know with [the] stack [function]. For me, I feel like I can still work on that. I think the only thing I really still find difficult is if I look at someone else's pattern, to actually understand what they're doing in that pattern and how to break it up.
- Interviewer (18:02): What do you think are some of the things you could do to improve that?
- Informant (18:09): Well, I could ask questions for one, but watching performances probably helps a lot with it, I guess. Other than that, I really don't know.
- Interviewer (18:29): Right. When I started with Tidal I tried to watch as many performances as I could and wrote down all the code that looked interesting to me. I would then take it the code just as is and experiment with the parameters and turn into something new, also breaking it up into sections to see what the code was doing. In that way I was able to see how others were constructing their code and how they were breaking the sections up, syntactically speaking.
- Informant (19:33): That's actually what I started doing last week, but then the whole thing with the background and Hydra came in. I was like, I need to ask Melandri what's happening here. I remember the first time I watched a SuperContinent performance I saw this stuff happening in the background. I also found that quite interesting. It was so cool. I was literally looking at the code and I was like, how? I think that's what lead the whole thing about me wanting to find out how they do it.

Interviewer (20:09): Yeah, so one of the members of SuperContinent - Jessica - she also made her own programming languages, some in Spanish, that basically from my understanding, are is able to trigger specific events when particular words are spoken. I'm not 100% sure how it works, but it's very interesting. She also uses Hydra which was created by Olivia Jack.

Informant (20:55): Yeah, I remember watching a video. It was also Jessica and Olivia. They basically quickly explained using Hydra in Estuary. I didn't know that she had her own language.

Interviewer (21:29): How would you compare your understanding of TidalCycles from when you first start until now?

Informant (21:38): Obviously I think it's a lot better. My understanding of it is a lot better. There is still a lot that I can learn like expanding on my code, and it just experimenting with new sounds overall, because I know that sometimes I go back to stuff that we've already done. Then I look at, for example, someone like Llewellyn's code and [it] looks weird, but there's something happening the code that sounds quite cool.

Interviewer (22:28): I want you to think about when we're in a jam session together. It's often the case where something is playing for quite some time and I think about how nice it would be if someone could just change something so we can move on from it. How do you feel about it every time something like that happens where it feels like we're a bit stuck in once place, or something is might be too loud?

Informant (23:19): Usually what happens with me is, sometimes I'm still unfamiliar with some of the sounds. I know the code for it, but I forget how it sounds. That is when I put down my gain, because I sometimes think that it's me. There's one time that it happened in a performance and I wasn't sure whose code it was. I kind of got a bit irritated and I was just thinking oh my word what is Melandri thinking. She's probably

screaming. I would say that I get irritated with it, but like I said, I sometimes don't know if it's me or another person who's in the wrong.

Interviewer (24:26): With everything that goes on in any given rehearsal or performance, do you sometimes feel you can't hear yourself as well?

Informant (24:44): Sometimes I do find it difficult to hear my code.

Interviewer (24:54): Right. I get that yes. I think everyone in the group often loses track of what happens, because everyone's code becomes so enmeshed with everyone else's that it does become challenging to keep track of that. Would you be able to reflect on some of your experiences as a member of UPLORc over the past six months? I want you to think back to a specific moment that perhaps stood out to you. It could be something that happened during a performance or a rehearsal - if you could reflect on that?

Informant (26:15): If we're talking about performances, every time before a performance, I didn't have state fright or anything, but before the first UPLORc performance, I thought about this being the first time I'm doing something like this. What if I mess up? But it went by so fast, and it was actually so much fun. After the performance, I would go back and rewatch it and follow the people's comments. It's nice seeing what other people also think. I find it exciting especially because it's something new. I think it's because it's been a long time since I've performed with the whole Covid thing. I just find the whole experience very exciting. Because it's online and everything, the one thing that I found really cool, when I did research on laptop orchestras, was that usually everyone has their laptops and they're coding together [in the same place]. But it's not possible with Covid at the moment.

Interviewer (28:27): Originally my plan was to run UPLORc from here anyway and then come up to Pretoria every now and then for performance, but obviously it didn't work out that way. In a lot of ways I was already preparing myself to run this orchestra completely

online, so when Covid hit that wasn't that much of a concern for me. But hopefully things will get back to some sense of normalcy soon. Have you been vaccinated?

Informant (28:49): I mean, we could still hope. Yeah, I'm fully vaccinated. Yeah yeah um, well, okay.

Interviewer (29:10): Wonderful. Good. You've only been a member for about nine months in UPLOrC, but do you think your time as a member has benefitted you as a musician in any way?

Informant (29:38): So obviously, we're all busy, especially [if you are] studying music, and sometimes the burnout is real. Sometimes I would just get home from practice and campus and I would just be tired. The ensemble gave me the opportunity to take my mind [off of it]. Still being a musician, but not studying music. I think that's the only thing I can really say about that.

Interviewer (30:28): Do you find that the way things are set up in Estuary, where we can all see what the others are typing - is that helpful to you in any way?

Informant (31:13): Yeah, I would say that. Especially because I'm still learning. It's nice to see what the other person is doing, and then I can kind of copy it and put my own twist on it. I think if I had to do it alone, I wouldn't know what to do.

Interviewer (31:43): What do you think are some of the drawbacks of live coding with other people?

Informant (32:01): Maybe rephrase? I kind of understand what you're saying, but I'm not sure.

Interviewer (32:07): Do you think there are moments when we play together where something might affect you during the process, or your process, while you're live coding with other people?

Informant (32:24): I don't think so.

Interviewer (32:33): Okay, that's cool. Let me ask you this, do you often think about the way you approach things when you're live coding in the ensemble?

Informant (32:43): I'm not quite sure what to answer to that.

Interviewer (33:06): That's okay. I just want to know what you're thinking when we're improvising together, and if what everyone else is doing affects your choices in some way?

Informant (33:21): Oh, yeah. That's actually what I wanted to say. I think that's the only thing at this moment in time.

Interviewer (33:35): Right then. I'm happy. I might need to have another interview with you, if necessary. But I will let you. I don't think it will be, but let' see. If I do need to, would you be willing to have a second one?

Informant (34:01): Yeah, no problem. I hope I could answer all your questions and that it wasn't a waste of your time.

Interviewer (34:17): No. No. Not at all. I actually do have one more question before I let you go. Is there something, in terms of how I have presented everything to the members of UPLOrC, that you think I could improve upon?

Informant (34:57): Well, at this moment in time you're the best. I honestly there's nothing wrong with the way you explain things. You're open to questions, even in performances or rehearsals. Even last week, when you said "when you have any questions just ask." If I didn't ask the stack question I would still be hanging on to one line of code. So, there's nothing at this moment in time.

Interviewer (35:36): Thank you. I appreciate that.

Informant (35: 39): You're a great manager.

Interviewer (35:44): Thank you so much for your time Danelle.

Informant (35:46): Okay. Have a nice day.

Interviewer (35:49): You too. Bye-bye.