

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW #9

Date	10 November 2021	Duration	00:25:14
Interviewer	Principal researcher	Informant	Informant I

Informant (00:01): Hello.

Interviewer (00:03): Hey, how's it going?

Informant (00:06): Good and you?

Interviewer (00:07): Good. Sorry, I just want to make sure that I'm recording your audio in OBS. Could you just speak again?

Informant (00:): Right, so my voice should be heard right now.

Interviewer (00:23): Yes, it's coming through. Thank you. You can keep the video off, if you're comfortable. I'm okay to keep it off. I don't mind. I don't really care too much. What matters is what you're going to say. How [have] you been?

Informant (00:43): I've been good. I've been very, very busy. More than I thought I was going to be.

Interviewer (00:49): [Are you] in your second year now?

Informant (00:55): Yeah, but I'm also I'm also tutoring a few students for science and math. That means that I also have to take care of them being able to write their exams and all of that.

Interviewer (01:11): Right. You have to prepare them.

- Informant (01:13): Yeah, I've been very, very busy with that and obviously now with my own thing, as well. My exams and assignments and all that stuff.
- Interviewer (01:32): Yeah, [it's] that time of year. It's also so weird that everything's like ending so late. I heard [you are all] ending exams in mid-December or something.
- Informant (01:46): Yeah, but anyways, we need to get started because I actually need to be at another lesson at [inaudible] forty-five.
- Interviewer (01:54): Okay, cool. Did you say 15:45?
- Informant (01:59): Two.
- Interviewer (02:00): Okay, cool. We'll be done way before that. Let's get [started]. [I think] it's going to be quite easy. I know you've been part of UPLOrC for a really short time, and also, you are quite busy. That might be a huge factor for you, but I want to hear from you what some of your experiences have been over the past, however many months you've been with UPLOrC. Obviously, I'm going to ask you questions that I've prepared. I just want to want to let you know that when you answer these questions that you keep [your experiences] in mind as we go along. [There are] about four sections [of questions focusing] on different things. The first thing I'm going to ask you [to reflect on] is about yourself and what your interests are with regards the type of music that you enjoy, and so on. I [suppose] another thing I would really like to hear about is your musical background. What was your training like? Where did you start? Where did you end up to do? What kind of musical background do you have is [what] I'm trying to ask. [If] you could reflect on that perhaps.
- Informant (03:41): Okay. Yes. I've been a music student for quite a long time. I've done music from a very young age. Even before coming to South Africa. I'm actually Latin-American. I came to South Africa in 2012, and by that time, I already had two years of experience in musical training. Music as a concept, first of all, and in music

performance. I had been in a choir already at that point in my life. I had done solo performances as a singer from a very young age and also understood music theory and a lot of the basic aspects of music. I came here already having a pretty good knowledge of what music was and how music worked. Then I also had about a year and a half of experience in self-taught guitar, but to [the] point where I could actually play some things on the guitar. I could play some chords. I could just fiddle around more. More than most people would do at a at such a young age and [being] self-taught. Having arrived here, there was no music course I could take [in] primary school. So, I ended up not actually doing music for a while, until I got to high school. When I got to high school, I was in the school choir through grade eight to 12, and I was in the youth choir [at the] University of Pretoria, which is also an affiliated organization. [They're] not Tuks students. They're school students and they fall under the umbrella of the Tuks music department. I was there from 2016 through to my matric year in 2019. I was also a music student [in Pretoria]. I was trained in classical guitar and in trumpet. [I got] to my Royal Schools grade eight and in both. Obviously, [I was] also doing my music subject and [matriculated] with an 88% in 2019 for that subject. I did three instruments [for that]. I did guitar, trumpet and voice then auditioned with the voice for Tuks. Now I am a voice student at [here].

Interviewer (06:48): Oh, wow. That's so cool to hear how you started with the one thing and then ended up studying voice. That's pretty cool. Is there a particular reason why you think you ended up choosing or going with voice for [your] varsity studies?

Informant (07:12): It's always been the instrument that's been most synonymous with me. I played the guitar [and] I ended up learning some chords and singing [along]. Now I'm actually learning piano as well and [I'm doing the same thing]. With [the] trumpet, it never really clicked. It was never something I really enjoyed [on] the same level that I would enjoy singing, and even playing classical guitar or normal, contemporary guitar. I was never as interested in it as I was in singing. I ended up taking up singing in university because it was something that I actually enjoyed.

Interviewer (08:01): If you could put words to it, how would you define yourself as a musician?

Informant (08:14): Well, I'm a very versatile musician. I know a lot of different styles. I've had experience in many different spheres, from big band-- Oh yeah, I was in a bunch of bands in high school. From big bands and trumpet, to orchestra and trumpet as well, choirs, solo choirs, duets [and] trios. From contemporary music, to opera, to Renaissance music. I know a lot about many different styles, and I've performed and gained experience in many different styles. I have a very good understanding of music as a holistic thing. As a musician, I'm a pretty varied music musician. I also understand many different instruments having played many different ones. I don't leave any of them to a basic level. Even in piano, I'm putting in the hours and I understand how it works now. I've put in the hours for guitar. I've put in the hours for voice. Now I'm putting in the hours for piano. So, I know how it all works at this point.

Interviewer (09:40): Would you say you lean more towards the performance realm of being musician?

Informant (09:54): I think I lean more towards the musicianship side of music, right. The actual creative process and the interpretation of what music as an activity is, music as a concept in itself. For me, music was never [about the] need to perform, for the sake of music to [be relevant] or for me to want to do it. I have always enjoyed music, even just from a listening point of view, or even just playing it for myself. It has never been something that would make me intrigued to do performance or intrigued to [be famous] or anything of the sort. In fact, I would discourage that if it was ever happening to me. If I was invited to sign for a record label or something of the sort, I would actually decline that because it would not be where I want to add with music at all. It's a rather [inaudible] and I want to say a hobby that I've just sort of given my life over to somehow. It's a little bit of a strange situation [and] not exactly my area where I'm looking to necessarily make a profit. I very likely might become a music teacher. I personally believe that every musician at some point will end up

teaching, which is a good thing. Otherwise, whatever you ended up achieving doesn't get imparted [onto] anyone.

Interviewer (12:01): Yeah, I think [a person will be] naive [to] think [they're] not going to teach at any point. But anyway, that's my two cents. That's all I need from that section. Let's go on to the second section. We're getting more into [UPLorc-related questions] now. I remember that short session I had with [your class in your] tutorial back in, I think it was April, if I'm not mistaken. I don't know.

Informant (12:33): Oh, I missed it. I know which one you're talking about.

Interviewer (12:36): Right. Anyway. You heard of UPLorc via [someone]? Who [was the person that] told you about the [ensemble]? Do you remember?

Informant (12:45): I remember joining the lecture late because my connection was being rather problematic. I remember [our lecturer] discussing something about a live coding, music coding thing. Something like that is what I heard. I thought, well, let's try this. It looked interesting [and it was] something that I definitely hadn't tried before. As you know, with my ideology [about] music, it has never been a thing of I want this necessarily to be my [profession]. I [just] wanted to explore different things. It was very much the same thing when I decided to take part in UPLorc. I wanted to explore this sphere. I wanted to know what [live coding] is. How does the creative presses work? I definitely had never coded music before. So, it was very much that.

Interviewer (13:44): Okay, that's interesting. Not necessarily coding music, but not even coding at all right?

Informant (13:54): Oh, yeah. Not even coding at all. I can't remember what [application] it was, [but] there was a Microsoft [program] where you could grab shapes and make little commands. But it was very basic, two by two kind of thing. I can't remember it all.

Interviewer (14:15): I kind of have an idea of what you're talking about. I have this picture in my mind.

Informant (14:24): It's not supported anymore, but it was an old thing where you could paste different blocks together. By doing that it wrote [the] code for you, or something like that. But it's very old. We're talking 2008/2009.

Interviewer (14:39): That's too far back for me. [Can you] remember what you were thinking about when you saw or used TidalCycles for the first time, or if you can remember anything from that [period of] time?

Informant (15:13): Yes. Well, I remember that we had just made a few rhythms with it. I was trying to make the funkiest rhythm I could come up with. Something that sounded completely off the charts. Something that I could not conceive of in my brain as just putting down a rhythm. [It] is one thing to put down a bunch of quavers [or] a bunch of semibreves. It's another thing for a [sinusoidal] curve to determine where notes will be played. It's completely different. I remember that being a striking thing at first. I also remember I quite liked the [Estuary] interface. I was just playing around with it. Just writing different things [on Estuary] was really interesting. Obviously, I had no DO RE MI [solfège], C D E [note names], C major or minor [key signatures]. All those things. The [key signatures], the accidentals, all of those I understood from a very young age, and to have none of that being applied [to] the music that we're making was definitely interesting.

Interviewer (16:48): If you go deeper into TidalCycles you eventually get to use functions that can manipulate arpeggios and chords and all that stuff. That's something that develops over a long time. I'm actually only working on that myself at the moment, but it's interesting. Okay, so let me see what else I have here. This is something that comes up quite a lot, I think, for some people. I'm curious to know there's any element in live coding that you struggle with and I know for some people it might be coming up with ideas for some people it might be--

Informant (17:52): For me, it's really just remembering the things that [the functions] do. I remember how to write the code, and I remember the phrases [syntax]. Sometimes the format is a little bit iffy [referring to where a function is placed]. I forget what they do [sometimes]. There's some basics that always fall back on, [for example, `every 2 (slow 2)`], `gain`, `sound samples` and `stack`. Those [types of] functions. Those are easy to remember, but some of them - like [`jux rev`], or something like that - I can't remember for the life of me what they do. So sometimes I end up just adding functions there and I don't even know what they do. I just add them. [There were] definitely some [moments that] yielded some really interesting things.

Interviewer (18:57): It's cool how sometimes something can just jump out at you [that] you didn't even think [was] even a possibility.

Informant (19:06): Or sometimes you don't know what this function will do, but then sometimes there's so many of them together that, even if you knew what they all did, you have no idea what it sounds like.

Interviewer (19:18): You'd have to deconstructed it completely.

Informant (19:26): For sure. It's interesting.

Interviewer (19:30): Okay, cool. Um, that's very -- Sorry?

Informant (19:38): We need to make quick. I need to leave in about five to 10 minutes.

Interviewer (19:44): Cool. Yeah, I have two, maybe three more questions tops. Do you think your time as a member of UPLorc has benefited you in any way?

Informant (19:55): Definitely, because it's made me realise [or think of] music as a concept in general. Especially having done ethnomusicology earlier this year and understanding music coming from completely different places. Pop music is a completely different thing

to classical music, western background. [It's] completely different. Latin-American music uses some western elements, but even then, it has a completely different motive, a completely different purpose. Most of the time, the topics are centered around a very specific thing, which is usually "I love this girl, so let me write a song for her." But let's not go there. The point is, music [is] so varied, and just understanding how different musics are created, [how they] are played around with or explored, how other creative processes are different for different music. It's just been really interesting and really eye opening. It's been like a golden thread this year, if I can say.

Interviewer (21:15): Oh, wow. Okay, cool. That's really good to hear. Everything that's happening with [UPLOrc] is what I've been learning as a member of another ensemble. That obviously has a part to play in [my interactions with you all]. My main question would be then, do you think there's something that - and you can be brutally honest, I don't care - you think I could improve on to make UPLOrc better in any way. As an instructor, you know what I mean?

Informant (22:02): Yeah. Well, definitely if there was a way to have [more] of a personalised [interaction]. If you take a normal rehearsal, for example, and an orchestra. You have all these people with different instruments and they rehearse their [parts] together and they learn to play together. However, all those individuals didn't learn to play their instruments at the orchestra. In the same way [in] UPLOrc, all those different people didn't-- In our case, they did learn to code mostly in the UPLOrc rehearsals [and workshops]. I feel if there was some sort of way that it's a weekly [session where we] learn to use these functions. There was some of that but not a teacher-student kind of situation where there's an exchange of communication [through playing together]. Even if they're [held] once a month for 30 minutes that you know it's going to be a one on one thing and where a student learns from [the] teacher. I feel like that would really help to play on the dynamic of mentorship that's widely seen in music.

Interviewer (23:53): That's a really great insight. I really appreciate that. I definitely would consider spending more one on one time with you [all]. Doing these interviews, is the first time I really get to know you and your background and where you come from, musically speaking. It's been really great to learn that, but it will also be great to expand on that, as you say. I think I have everything I need. I really appreciate [you taking the time to talk to me]. I know you have a really busy schedule, and so do I. It's great that we put [some] time [aside] to chat. We must do this again and all the best with exams and everything for the rest of the year.

Informant (24:43): Yes, thank you so much. All the best for you as well. I do need to be on my way. I will be leaving right now.

Interviewer (24:50): Alright. I'll talk to you soon.

Informant (24:53): All right, cool. Let me know if there's anything else you need? I just might not be able to do today.

Interviewer (25:04): I think it's all good.

Informant (25:08): All right. Cool. Take care. See you then on Friday, I think?

Interviewer (25:10): Yes. Yeah.

Informant (25:12): All right. Cheers.

Interviewer (25:13): Bye.

****END OF INTERVIEW ****