



*jazz, free improvisation and cacophony*

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JAN  
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by  
Dave Foxall

## 7 QUESTIONS FOR... DGANIT ELYAKIM

POSTED IN **PEOPLE & PLACES**

*Dganit Elyakim is a composer and sound artist born and based in Tel Aviv. Working at the conjunction of sound and performance, digital and analogue, political and personal, her work is challenging and even confrontational, while retaining a thread of humour (well, that's my perception, anyway).*

### 1. What was your first musical instrument, and what did it mean to you?

My first musical instrument is my body. It is comprised of two inherent musical instruments: my voice and beating its organs on other objects, an action that we call "drumming". Like most kids, I used them both from a pretty early age... But at the age of 7 I got my first technological instrument: a piano. How enchanted I was by this extension of my body. At the age of 18 I started playing on the extension of my nervous system – the computer. I enjoy playing on all of them to this very day...

### 2. Who or what are you listening to at the moment?

Every day I get to listen to so many different things... my latest purchase is **Alen Iljic's** album (awesome!). The 10 "most recently played" items on my player are: Anat Pick's "TongueTram 2" (I love it!), Buxtehude's cantatas (gorgeous), Gilius van Bergeijk albums (my former teacher and a great composer), Lotte Lenya (the goddess...) sings Kurt Weil, Orlande de Lassus (I love his humour),



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TWEETS

Ornette Coleman (a true free spirit), Pierre Schaefer and Pierre Henry (back to the old masters), Rameau (he rocks!), Rhodri Davis (who gave me this album as a present – best present ever!), and a live recording of a beautiful composition by Ronald Boersen . My morning alarm is set on a piece by Hildegard Von Bingen. When I drive, I listen to music from the audio archives. Today, I listened to Yoni Silver solo on his bass clarinet (inspiring). Tomorrow, my answer might be quite different...

### 3. What's the starting point for a composition?

For me, the starting point for a composition is the message behind it. Only then comes the orchestration and the compositional method which serve the message most adequately. Nowadays, I focus on political messages. After a few years as an activist, demonstrating against the occupation and the apartheid in Israel, I realised that we are too little to win and that we work in an old-fashioned system against well-oiled machines that seed fear (and then comes hatred...). I fell into depression. But I couldn't go on demonstrating that message through my existence just as well... So I started involving political messages in my music. Call me naive, but I do believe that music can make a change in people, especially when we're young. It surely had a significant role in shaping my own identity. I'll never forget the first time I heard Einstürzende Neubauten. More than twenty years later, my spirit still sings their songs: disobey, it's a law...

### 4. What superstitions or rituals do you have? (around performance, recording, everyday life?)

I meditate a few times a week and I do physical exercise that people might mistakenly call "Yoga". But it's not really a ritual, I don't force myself into it if I don't feel like it... and I read poetry in the toilet. It's completely perverse but I highly enjoy it.

### 5. If the avant-garde, by definition, includes rejection by the mainstream, how do you find and reach an audience for your work?

I guess that the question aims for a quantitative answer but let me start with a qualitative one. In 2014, HaTeiva (a small concert hall in Tel Aviv that focuses on contemporary music) invited me to do as I wish for a few evenings during the year. I decided to curate a concert series. "The Unbearable Lightness of Coherency" brings into focus sound-poetry, voice artists, contemporary poetry, alternative approaches to text in music and other creatures. Pretty avant-garde, almost idiosyncratic...

At the first concert, we had less than 30 people in the crowd but they were curious, enthusiastic and we gave quite a show. I think I experienced a catharsis when the owner of the venue, the composer Dan Yuhas, shook my hand and said "It's with pleasure that HaTeiva loses money for such a concert".

Now I shall relate to the quantitative aspect:

The series is running for the third year in a row. By now, part of the audience are 'regulars'. It features some amazing musicians from all over the world. The tickets sales cover the expenses and allow high quality documentations which I share on internet radio stations and audio archives as well as websites such as Vimeo and YouTube. Let's face it: the avant-garde exists only in small circles in every western country. People who write avant-garde don't think of filling a stadium. But the internet connects those small villages and "prolongs" the life of a concert by documentation, which is available in any given moment.

### 6. Where do you stand on the streaming/downloading/file-sharing/musicians-not-getting-paid-for-

**a Jazz Noise** @ajazznoise 27 Jan  
Daily Tune #490 - thanks to @esmucatt, I'm listening to Ornette today.  
"Lonely Woman"[bit.ly/ajnDT490](https://bit.ly/ajnDT490)  
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**a Jazz Noise** @ajazznoise 26 Jan  
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Full review of Some Some Unicorn and The Golden Periphery  
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Daily Tune #488 - Some Some Unicorn with a wondrous (and sometimes disturbing) soundscape...[bit.ly/ajnDT488@ssx](https://bit.ly/ajnDT488@ssx)  
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**their-music debate?**

I believe that there are two different issues presented in this question and that they don't really correlate to each other...

I'll start with sharing – sharing is an act of love and I love to love... Now seriously, I have a NEED to share, my music depends on the listening of the other. The more I get to share my music, the more validation it gets. Moreover, my product isn't materialistic. Sharing doesn't make me run out of it... I'm going to release my debut album, "Failing Better" in March (under the label: Aural Terrains). I don't regard it as a commercial product but as a cultural one, a subjective point-of-view of a specific time-space reality that wants to dialogue with as many people as possible. I strongly request each and every person who reads this interview: If you don't have the money to pay for it, please rip it off!



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Regarding the not-getting-paid debate:

Musicians exist much longer than the record industry. Let us not glorify the golden era of records. Let us not forget that too many musicians were enslaved by record companies through abusive contracts. We can earn our living by performing live concerts, awards and grants. I teach in the university and I love it. Most composers through history were music teachers. It keeps us sharp, in tune (or de-tuned...) with contemporary ideas and fashions.

**7. If money and time were no object, what would your next project be?**

Lately I composed a large-scale piece, "Cod++(e,a).choose". It is based on Eran Hadas' poetry book "Code" which was written as a code designed to uncover all the haiku poems hidden in The Torah.

Cod++(e,a).choose



The piece consists of 1595 miniatures, written for a text-to-speech application based on Eran Hadas' voice, an automated piano, electronic sounds and ready-made audio samples. I got funding to compose the first book – Genesis – which is 372 minutes long but I never got to perform the entire piece. So, if money and time were no object, I'd probably compose all 5 books and also perform the 25-hour-long piece.

To keep track of Dganit's music and other projects, check out her website, [misscomposed.com](http://misscomposed.com)

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