

Transcript of Interview with M Lamar by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: M Lamar

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 03/23/2021

Location (Interviewee): Brooklyn, New York

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we talked about included:

Spiritual survival: music as a spiritual experience, the breath as sacred, the sensory experience of operatic techniques, singing oneself out of bed. The possibility that capital as we know it might change: Stimulus checks, welfare state. The opportunity to really work on vocal technique and the loss of the experience of performing for a crowd, muscle memory of the voice. Grandfather's experiences of abuse at the hands of white landowners under sharecropping, and the consequences of intergenerational trauma. White supremacy and the pitting of working-class white people against working class people of color, white male anxieties about safety, hate crimes, murders by police. Looking forward to getting vaccinated. Living with a boyfriend during the pandemic, finding alone time, access to loving touch. Having a low-risk threshold. Insurance and financial access to somatic therapy and 12 step programs. Regular visits with health care practitioners pre-pandemic and how the pandemic changed that: stopped taking PREP to avoid risk of COVID-19 exposure at clinics. Anticipation of 2020 touring, and decisions about whether or not to play/cancel a show on March 3, 2020. The greatest excuse not to socialize. Donald Trump and spectacle. The intersections of the internet with DIY spaces, not-for-profit galleries, and illegal spaces. People becoming brands. Grant writing.

Kit Heintzman 00:02

Hello.

M Lamar 00:03

Hello. Oh, no, I just said hello, hello.

Kit Heintzman 00:07

Ah, would you please start by telling me your full name, the date, the time and your location?

M Lamar 00:13

My full name is M. Lamar. The time is 2:16pm. Eastern Standard Time. I'm in Brooklyn, New York. And hi.

Kit Heintzman 00:26

Hi. And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

M Lamar 00:38

Yes, I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:40

Could you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who may find themselves listening to this? What might you want them to know about you and the position you're coming from?

M Lamar 00:50

Well, again, my name is M Lamar. I make music primarily, I make video film I sometimes engage in, in art installation, kinds of practices within art galleries or art spaces. I'm also in pre production on two documentary films. I'm directing. I'm very motivating. I'm pulling my creative life for a very, very, very long time. And so I would love to encourage anyone who might be listening at any point in history to investigate my work. I mean, I didn't know Bandcamp will exist in 50 years, but you can find me there. You can find me on Spotify. Amazon, music, itunes, all those places, YouTube. I don't know if those places will exist in 50 years, but my work is found and all of those places. And yeah, if you're interested in in a sort of, How would I describe what I do Negro Gothic music. I'm a male soprano slash countertenor, or male treble voice. I play piano. I make sort of long form pieces about a number of sort of difficult subjects. Like say, the transatlantic slave trade or the persistence of police murder, unarmed black people in a peaceful funeral Doom spiritual the slave ship Requiem is speculum arm shackled to the dead, of a piece called Lordship and bondage, the birth of the Negro Superman, which is about transcendence and, and spiritual awakening in the context of extreme dehumanization in the context of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. That album is a collaboration with the classical do the living Earth show. So yeah, that's like a small little introduction to who I am. A little bit. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 02:57

May I ask what the term pandemic means to you?

M Lamar 03:03

It's funny, because years ago, I, I wrote a song called I Am disease, and I'm spreading disease, and I'm spreading slowly, slowly, slowly. And then I said something about being a pandemic, pandemic, and I will kill you. So this is very silly song that I wrote a very long time ago. Um, I mean, so years ago, and so I sort of like somebody reminded me of a dear friend of mine reminded me that I wrote that song years ago, and we had a laugh about it. I'm painting pandemic, I mean, I'm, I mean, the sort of very petty intellectual side of me, I'm fine. Zedd. titillating it as an opportunity. I mean, the intellectual part of me sort of sees it as an interesting opportunity to sort of, like have capital, as we know, it ceased. I mean, I think that about a year ago, when it really kicked in this is, yeah, this is March 22. I just didn't show in San Francisco, maybe March 3 of last year, that was the last show that I played, you're gonna usually play several times a week. It's very unusual. But um, I think, at the time on intellectual level, I was very intrigued by how this capitalist machine that everyone tells you must continue and, and one must labour in some exploitative way. It's an exploitative job where the people who own the company makes so much more than the people who were, you know, sort of cleaning the toilets or whatever I mean, that all of that stopped. And then suddenly the government could sort of send people money and in all these sort of like sort of right wing people and and conservative Democrats or even moderate Democrats, but sort of say there's no way we could afford to do this, this government assistance thing for all you know, citizens, etc. etc thing and then suddenly there was this pandemic and everything stopped. Everyone was sort of terrified. And and then suddenly, there was they were just sitting next to people. And I thought, well, this is interesting. I mean, for decades, you know, the sort of the very famous 40 years of the program that sort of progressive people have been talking about this, the redistribution of wealth upwards, you know, that people like Cornel West and, and Bernie Sanders, I

guess, you know, sort of, more recently, I've heard talking about it, but I mean, I don't know, 1015 20 years ago, Cornel West was talking about this radical redistribution of wealth upwards, right, from the working and middle classes up to, you know, the 1%. And so, it was interesting, in this moment of complete shutdown, that there was all this opportunity to sort of distribute all of these resources to just normal people, not just sort of, you know, millionaires and billionaires, you know, it through tax cuts, or sort of, or tax policy or state tax, you know, policies, etc, etc. It was just like, oh, we'll just give people money. And so to me, pandemic has to mean, like, I guess it means many things. But I mean, immediately, I think this is such an interesting opportunity to sort of move towards something that is more, I would just, say, a welfare state where, where we do provide safety nets for all of citizens, you know, like, I think that, to my knowledge, I think that Canadian citizens in your in Canada, right, now you can, so you can correct me, if I'm wrong than this, we're just getting a sort of a sum of money monthly, because of the shutdown, my understanding, I have friends in Berlin, who were just getting \$2,000 checks every month, like, rather than just one \$2,000 check, like over a nine month period, or 10 month period, or something, they were getting, like sort of the supplements, like every month, because they couldn't sort of like be a part of this machine of capital, where their labor is being exploited, etc, etc.

M Lamar 06:57

And so I think it's an interesting opportunity to sort of, like, try to re distribute wealth. To me, I think that, um, it's a great in the United States, right? I mean, certainly in in other countries that are, they're considered, I guess, global leaders, or first world countries, I don't know, if I have a feel about third world in principle at language, I didn't if I have the language that I enjoy, or that makes sense to me to describe what the United States is relative to your relative to Canada, etc. But um, to me, it's a great opportunity to address what reduced redistributing resources looks like and can mean for just everyday people, and there being some sort of like real social safety net, I mean, that a lot of the appeal of someone like Bernie Sanders was really not socialism, but it kind of, cuz he's not a socialist. I mean, he said, he wasn't democratic socialist, but really, he's a, an FDR, kind of, like Democrat, you know, like, where he sort of, like, wants a really big state and a really, um, where, you know, there's like, people have a living wage, people have health care, there's access to education, you know, we unions are strong, like these kinds of basic kinds of things that just leads to more dignity for everyday citizens. So it means to me, at least in the United States, this opportunity to sort of like think well, then, you know, this thing happens, and suddenly the government can, in fact, send people checks, and then the world did not end, you know, like the world didn't stop is all of these sort of like, you know, politicians, both Democrat and Republican would tell you, Bill Clinton type Democrats would tell you, Hillary Clinton type don't tell you, Brock, Obama type Democrats will tell you, the world will stop if we just provide some health care for people, or we just provide. So that's what it means to me, mostly, I mean, certainly, in a very personal level, and emotionally, it's meant that I have not been able to engage and the thing that I find the most joy in doing in my life, which is performing in front of people. I haven't been able to do that in the last year. And so that is very amazing, emotionally devastating, actually. very unsettling, emotionally very. Um, I mean, I think that I think all performers are having an identity crisis, because it seems as if like, Okay, so we've had this year where people still perform in rooms with people, maybe they do it on the internet or something. But maybe we think that maybe this isn't a thing that the world needs, you know, like, maybe we are not of any use to the world, the world's been able to sort of continue somehow without us. And so I think that a lot of us are at least I mean, I should speak very personally, I know I am having sort of an identity crisis, because that's been this thing that I've been doing for a very, very, very, very, very long time. Like I would be on a stage somewhere. At least once a week, you know, if not more, and then, of course rehearsing and preparing to perform, I mean, I'm still rehearsing, I'm preparing, there's like the sort of this is grand release that we get to have, which is the performance, you know, after

preparing something for like years and years, maybe a piece or a piece of music or something. And so, so I do want to say that there was something wonderful in a way about being able to just prepare. And I do get a great amount of joy in that, like, just being able to sort of sit with, you know, a piece of music that I'm working on that I didn't compose, you know, or preparing something that I did compose, just being with sit with it for very long time rehearsing all kinds of, like, detailed aspects of it, I mean, that if I'm singing words, I don't always sing words, but if I'm singing words, like, you know, sort of like trying to figure out the best way to say the word, a voice teacher, that I, that had been remotely you know, so working with. So it's really fantastic to be able to prepare, and it's really working, and then sort of like even reevaluating technique, you know, I mean, when you're constantly performing, you can't like sort of break down your all of your technique and sort of rebuild it from scratch, if the things you need to fix, you know, and so when you're have this kind of time, away from the stage, you can sort of take all of the technique all of your technique apart and sort of put it back together again, it to sort of make it really a lot better if there's things that are sort of major things that you want to like sort of address in your, your method, your technique, your your approach. I mean, classical musicians or jazz musician, you know, musicians who, you know, where the technical aspect of it is very important to the execution of it can all relate to this, I think, if you really want to fix something.

M Lamar 11:51

And I think a lot of times professional musicians, because they're working all the time, they can't necessarily fix this issue. I mean, I'm a huge tennis fan, right? So I also watch. Um, so watch tennis, it's very technical, like you're a backhand, and forehand volley, all of these things are very, they're very technical ways to do it correctly. And like Venus Williams, I'm a huge fan of the Williams sisters, obviously, I'm black, and they're black. And they're just extraordinary. But Venus has had, you know, over the last 25 years, she's been playing professional tennis, which is extraordinary in and of itself. She's had these issues with her forehand and her second serve, right, that they're taking the certain technical things that she needs to fix, or as needed to fix for, you know, decades now with those things, but either she's injured and so she can't work on it. When she's not playing, she's probably injured. And then when she's not injured, she's actually playing professionally. So there's not even in the in the offseason. And their offseason is very short. I mean, we're talking maybe six weeks, you know, maybe eight weeks tops, their offseason, there's not time to fix these things. Because you have to really kind of re tool the whole, you know, motion, because a lot of this stuff is motor memory, you know, when you play music, or you play tennis, or do something in like athletic, which is what music is, I mean, it's beautiful, and it's aesthetic, and it's transcendent, but it's also athletic. And so it's a lot of muscle memory. And so you have to sort of retrain all of your muscles to do things if you want to change something, technically. And so there's been this like thing as much as I love her. She's never had time to kind of just completely redo it. And so there's some things with like my vocal techniques that I've had time to completely redo. And this last year, which has been fantastic. And so I mean, not to just be completely on the on the sort of the downside of that sort of really depressing part of, of this pandemic question, which is mostly, I think, depressing. Now, suddenly, there's the death. That seems I mean, maybe inevitable or unavoidable, but it seems unavoidable, it seems, it seems avoidable, it's saving the United States, the Gree of death seemed avoidable. And so that's the kind of thing about government incompetence, and, and all these kinds of things, but um, but on the more positive front, which I sort of like to sort of strangely accent is when I'm sort of this Negro Gothic person is very interested in. I mean, I think that people are interested in the goth things can be. Positive, yes, that's true. So, um, I think just being able to sort of like work without the pressure of performing, even though it's a wonderful privilege, really, that pressure is a privilege to perform because I miss it so so so much, but I'm being able to re address like, sort of address certain kinds of technical things and try to really solve them, you know, because it's all it's, you know, all of these technical things are like,

you know, there's like a whole history usually within any discipline, a way to do it that is going to be optimal. And so you can all of these things can be fixed, you know, like they're all in BS Williams her, you know, second serve and forehand can be fixed. If she had time, you know, just to retool the whole thing. Any issue a singer might have with high notes or, or spreading on high notes or any number of things one might be doing swallowing maybe a vowel, I mean, like maybe not having as brilliant a tone as he would like having ease of sound, all of these things can be fixed with, with, you know, work, there's a lot of effort and work involved in fixing these things. And it's particularly if you're you have, you know, these habits that are a way of producing a sound like like very famously, Maria Collis had this kind of glottal attack that was like, in her early on in her career was a very expressive thing, but later on became this like crutch that was like, so impeding the technical flow of her sound. So, um, but you know, these things can be fixed within there, these habits that have formed it, you know, take a lot of work to unlearn.

M Lamar 15:56

And I think that's also like a, that goes back to the political environment of the world, there are all these habits that we have these ways of behaving politically, that are difficult to break, because we're just so used to doing them, but they can be broken. And it takes a lot of work to break those habits. There's political habits of Oh, yeah, we can't spend money on things, we can't just sit and people checks, you know, and I think they in the United States, a lot of it, this question of the welfare state becomes more complicated because of white supremacy. I mean, so much of the way that the ruling class, the white ruling class has been able to sort of like wield power is through sort of pitting working class, white people against black people generally, or, or women against men, but I think particularly working class people of color against working class white people, and the white people usually are able to continue to cosign on it, because whiteness is their only currency, because they don't have power, politically, economically. And they could have power politically, if they would move away from, you know, sort of the identification with white supremacy and realize that there's actually really this kind of class thing going on, and they're being manipulated by the 1%. Anyway, I'm sure many people will disagree with me on this, and it's maybe not where you were hoping that we would go with this. But I think that, um, this this routine of, you know, pitting, and this is a very old thing in the United States, like, you know, we're putting working class white people against all of black people and all people, people of color. And so then the working class white people could sort of, like rally around this whiteness as the sort of the thing that, you know, means that I am not you, I'm, I'm poor, I'm an educated, you know, I have no money, I have no health care, but at least I'm not black, you know. And so, rather than being like, well, maybe there's something that the government could do for me in terms of providing, like affordable education, free education. I mean, I think city colleges, community colleges should be free, why should never want to be able to, like, you can go to a free, no, grade school, high school, junior high school, like, why can't you go to a free community college, it's like, you know, gets all this government support, why, you know, why trade schools free for people to sort of get trading so that they can, you know, live a life of dignity with some sort of a career or job or vocation that is unionized, so that people have rights. Anyway, so I spend a lot of time thinking about these things. And so I think that that's a habit that we've been in. Instead of like pitting working class, white people against people of color, that we could break with a lot of work, though. It's like, you know, being a second serve, it would take a lot of work, to, you know, lose that that old muscle memory and develop new muscle memory around these things. But, um, I think it's possible maybe if this is an archival piece, maybe 50 years from now, it will be done. Now just sounds so you know, sort of archaic like, like, you mean, community colleges weren't free. You mean, like everyone didn't have like health care. They had to like sort of pay like an insurance company for like, health care. I mean, hopefully, that idea will seem just completely utterly ridiculous. And when people listen to this in the future, that wouldn't that be exciting? Hopefully, I'll just sound so

completely antiquated. And not speaking to anything really relevant to the world. Wouldn't that be lovely? And then you should listen to the lovely music by you can just engage in in the sounds that I make because I do think that music at its best is timeless and universal and can be appreciated by anyone. Sun raw was very I'm very, I've been obsessed with cinema for years now. And I mean, he one of his his sort of like, things he's very dogmatic about his music is the language that you can sort of blind a Saturday And then that that language will be understood by anyone. No, the sound sound has this this way of like traveling and and permeating the souls of beings. And it's truly the universal language. It's usually us always talking about, like, trying to make a music that could speak to all of these other worlds, all these other planets, you know. And I think that, um, you know, music really, yeah, that is the thing. I think that's, that's why that's been the thing that because, I mean, I have a lot of art training, I have a degree in art, for some reason. I love my music training as I've sort of gotten like not through university I guess I was in committee after I dropped out of graduate school graduate article, I sort of took like, Yo theory classes and piano classes, and that was an acquire all these things that are Community College in San Francisco. So I did do some university work in music, but most of its I have a private voice teacher, I've had private voice he just for years private piano teachers. Most of my training has been through private study versus like a conservatory or something.

M Lamar 21:13

But, um, but yeah, I spent a lot of time making use of doing art things. And so, um, and I didn't, I sort of, I still do that I'm gonna have it, I'm supposed to have a an exhibition in Houston, I think next year, this time. And then, of course, I mentioned I'm working on this documentary films. But music is the thing every day. I mean, to do what you have to, it's an everyday thing, it's a spiritual thing. It's like you, it's like waking up and meditating, or waking up, instead of exercising during whatever you're like the cardio thing that you need to do on a daily basis, or, you know, praying or whatever, whatever ones morning routine might be. To rise and to saying is, this is really a really a fantastic thing. For the Spirit, I mean, really, anyone can you don't have to be a musician, a professional musician to benefit from the spiritual oneness that you can have with your waking every morning. And sort of, you know, singing to oneself, is really fantastic. I mean, you know, unfortunately, I have to do scales. And I mean, I love doing those things. But it's not, it becomes a work at a certain point. It's not just the pure joy of it, because you're being precise. And then of course, if you're trying to change technical things, changing muscle memory, then that's a lot of work. But, um, yeah, what a joy is just to, you know, saying in a way that I discovered, in this year, a great joy and pleasure from just singing for myself, you know, I have a new kind of appreciation for what it can do to my spirit and to my, to my soul, just to sing to myself for myself. Like, that has really been a useful, like a very useful thing to carry. Well, hopefully, we'll be carrying out of this pandemic, which is what your initial question, hopefully I'll be able to carry that. So I mean, I think I was always thinking for myself, you know, but to be singing for myself. I sort of only, you know, I mean, not like, without with all with someone in a room with me sharing the kind of acoustic space. It's just me, it's been very wonderful. Really, um, it has been. So I think that, um, I mean, there are few musician friends of mine who, I mean, I tend to isolate anyway, so the isolation hasn't been that unusual. I mean, I maybe have taken it further than I should with it. I mean, since I have a tendency towards that anyway, I'm like, Okay, I mean, I don't want to get sick. So I'm just never gonna see anyone ever. It's probably not healthy. I mean, but I do have the privilege of, I live with my boyfriend. And so, I mean, I see him every day. And he's been working through this pandemic the entire time. So he leaves every day, which is wonderful. And I love him, you know, but the fact that he leaves every day is fantastic. Because, you know, I get all the time to myself. I love my time to myself, I love being alone with my thoughts with texts that I'm reading whatever book I'm reading, of course, all the work. You know, there's a lot of writing involved in what I do. I like just actually like writing the text, like, whether it's librettos, whether it's like

descriptions for pieces, like I'm sort of always when I'm performing. And actually I've been writing a lot of grants. And this down, I could get some calling it downtime. So there's a lot of writing involved in my life. And so that's a very isolating thing when needs to be alone to write. And so yeah, I love that my boyfriend leaves Free. And I love when he comes in. I'm very excited when he comes home and I, I greet him with with hugs and kisses and and all of the, you know, sort of adornment that one, you know, should heap upon someone that you love. But um, but yeah, I love my time to myself. And so but I think I've probably taken a little too far. Maybe someone was like, Oh, well, we could meet in a park when we wear masks, because I don't think I'm missing that chance. It's too risky. I mean, really, I mean, I probably would have said the same thing, you know, pre pen pandemics.

M Lamar 25:43

I'm not. I'm not sort of, like, aching to socialize with people. So this has been sort of wonderful. And then I always, I mean, I have had to sort of go into some shops to buy food. And I always wonder why people are sort of, like, sort of on top of me, like, if I'm waiting in line, like, why people are like, write up on me. Like, I've always wondered that. Like, why why would you give me some space, you know, and so this whole six feet distance thing is like, it's a fantastic idea. We can, you know, kind of move forward with that when we can give that one. This is a six feet apart thing. Fantastic. I love it. It's like so like, so wonderful. Like, I just don't understand why you would want to be on top of another person. Like it just, you know, like, I think people need, you know, their space. I mean, it's funny, though, because Emily lived my entire life. I grew up in Alabama, and moved to San Francisco, and you have a little more space in San Francisco, but it's still, you know, a very congested big city. And now I live in New York, and there's just no space in New York. So it's ironic that I would like it, let's say, you know, in public space, that little space, you know, not having people on top of me, but that is the nature of New York. And I love it too. I don't think I could live in a place like Iowa, or something or Wisconsin, these places that have like a lot of seemingly a lot of space. Wyoming I think has like lots of big open space and sort of landscape. For whatever reason that unnerves me, like I need, I find cities very comforting. There's a Kathy Acker story called a young girl. It's a short story, and she talks about the city is feeling very safe place. That all of the all of this danger, all these kinds of, you know, sort of like drugs or violence or death, or all these kinds of things. She was writing this in the 80s to use it. So New York in the 80s was a very dangerous place. I think, in particular, the Lower East Side, where she was like, living sounds about be feeling very safe in that kind of chaos. I feel very safe in the chaos of a city. Like I had to show Wesleyan. Not Wesleyan. I'm sorry, what is Vassar Have you ever been to that campus before? I have not. That was very it's a very beautiful campus. It's like very there's all these trees. There's all this sort of nature you feel very much in a nature environment it's has a monetary, monetary as money but modest monetary, like a place where monks you know, live it has that kind of sort of place where you can go to sort of learn and this kind of almost religious feeling environment of something completely unnerving to me. Not the not the sort of the the mog aspect of but I feel very monkish myself, in the sense of, of like living sort of outside of material, like possessions. I mean, I have material but you know, that that's not the primary thing motivating my life, I feel like this sort of the meditation of music, and living very simply, in many ways. But the nature part, like I just always feel like being a huge horror film person, I was like, sort of horrible things gonna happen. When I'm out in nature ever. Like, there's gonna be some person with a chainsaw, or a big sort of like knife or something who's gonna sort of Chase Me through. It's all very neurotic to me. I know it's irrational. I know, it's an irrational thing, but I feel very comfortable in cities. I feel very safe. It's it is, which is no contradiction. So yeah, I think that I think I answer your first question.

Kit Heintzman 29:16

You absolutely did. I'm curious to the extent that you're comfortable sharing, what were some of your experiences, like with regard to health and healthcare infrastructure, pre pandemic.

M Lamar 29:31

Um, pre pandemic, I take this thing called Truvada, Truvada, and it's called, which is a prep, you know, sort of a thing for people who are HIV negative, to sort of take daily appeal to daily to, you know, sort of make sure that they don't contract HIV in any kind of sex scenario. And so, when you're taking that pill every day, you have to see it Excuse me healthcare workers on a three month basis, and they sort of, you know, take your blood and give you all these sorts of tests. And so I mean, I despise going into medical facilities, I despise needles, you know, like, I, I've always, well, not so much these days, but you know, like, maybe when I was in college, and directly after I had a lot of friends who really enjoy, you know, doing heroin with like, needles, you know, it's, I've seen many, many people shoot up, like, all various kinds of drugs, and I've never, ever, ever done it, and I would never, I just despise the and I really don't like needles. And so I'm going to the whole, you know, every three months having to go and kind of, you know, be I feel it feels like a violation, I get that its health things, and it's my, for the best, I feel very, it feels like a violation to me. Yeah. Um, so I find it unpleasant and unfortunate. Health care, guys, but I appreciate because then I would, you know, I would do that there was a droplet every three months, just to make sure that it's all working well, to make sure that my liver is, you know, responding well to medication, etc, etc. And I think every six months, I would have a full checkup, you know, I think that those things are a good idea to have. And so I like I like go to the dentist, I sort of It's a thing I do, that I just don't really enjoy, but I think it's important, you know, it's my health. And so I have a, I'm deeply ambivalent about health care facilities, I'm ambivalent about them, but I'm, I'm, you know, sort of happy not happy to go Well, I'm glad to go to sort of have a just have some sort of like, to, to be engaged in self care in some way, I think it's a good idea, not just mentally and psychologically, emotionally, which is also really very important, but also, you know, medically, and so I try to stay logical about it, I try to, you know, be as sort of detached as possible when I go like very like business, like, when I go into those facilities, like if people try to be really personable with me, I like reject that. I just, it's a very, it's a very unfortunate thing for me to have to. I mean, maybe, and I think maybe it's about my own mortality, maybe Maybe it's about sort of the vulnerability of being human. I think that, um, I think a lot of the thing about the kind of singing that I've trained myself to do for a very long time is about a certain kind of a certain kind of supernatural thing. And I think that operatic vocal technique is the most kind of human like, in terms of, because it's such a, such a, it involves so much of your body, so much of your breath, so much of the sort of the literally, the, you know, in the inhale of air moving through your lungs, are supported with your diaphragm and your lower abdominal muscles, and then being exhaled out over, you know, through your trachea, over your soft palate. I mean, it's such a physical thing. And, and I do feel a certain kind of, even if I'm expressing the most vulnerable thing that I can possibly imagine, like the death of a mother or, or a lover or best friend, or being deeply profoundly unloved by your mother, being abandoned by your father, whatever the devastating thing I could be expressing there is something very reassuring about being able to sing through it and to sing through with a particular kind of sound. And so I think that, um, for me, I think that there was something so nerveing I'd like to think that I don't fear death, really, but I do. I think I do fear illness.

M Lamar 34:10

Um, and so I think that like being a medical facilities just sort of brings all those those issues up. And I think, I think I tried to be really rational about it, because I think I've become somewhat irrational, around my sort of, you know, I don't want to be taken care of by people, like I don't want to be ever in hospice, like, I'd rather just be dead, you know. So I'd like to think that I don't fear death because I do think death is just inevitable, you know, I

mean, we're all gonna die. But we all I don't think have to be suffering with illness for very long periods of time. Like I don't think that's that's, that's not a given I think, to quote Kathy Acker, suicide is always an option. And so I don't, I don't want prolonged illness. And so I think that it brings up you know, and just being vulnerable and powerless, you know, and I do A therapist years ago told me that, you know, control is an illusion, you know, that ultimately we're all powerless, you know, really, we have power against you, we have power in sort of our choices, right, we can choose to respond to things a certain way we can, you know, but there's, you know, you can get hit by a car, that could be a natural disaster, there could be somebody who just violently murdered you, you could, you know, cancer, liver disease, all kinds of other all kinds of things that are beyond our control, really, there's nothing we can control. But beyond it certain kinds of like, things like, you know, how we spend our time, what we spend our time doing, how we react to all of these things, you know, all of the things that will inevitably happen in life, we, I guess, can't control it, but we have some agency there. So I think Isn't that one of the things that they tell you in 12 Step things I'm powerless against, you know, whatever this thing is, I think this is being powerless against life, you know, you evitable things that will happen in life. And so I think that medical facilities bring all of that out in me. And so I don't like to do it, but I do it, I go to the dentist actually have to reschedule. That's the other thing too, because I think that during the pandemic, I did, I stopped taking the prep, because I was like, I'm not going to really go in near any facility right now. Because it just seems like there are lots of sick people there. And I don't want to take any chances. I was really not taking any chances at all. So I was very, I mean, I was already really isolated. And I really just, you know, took it to like, a new level levels of isolation. And it was, and I think that I mean, I'd like to sort of brag that it wasn't a big deal. But it is a big deal. Like, I think there's something about I mean, there were like routines, I would have like I had a relationship with a barista that I would go, I would go to a cafe in the morning to sort of have a decaf coffee and do my kind of administrative work. And this one cafe that I just, you know, stopped going to and the barista now doesn't work there anymore. He had to leave the city because he didn't have income to pay his rent. And so I don't know what happened to him. But I really did enjoy that interaction I would have with him every day. And I would have casual interactions with people like sort of on the street, or I maybe I would have lunch with people or, or have a coffee or something, they just do something. You know, I'm not that much. I mean, you know, I'm not crazy social person, but I would have some interactions. And I think that there is a kind of a madness that happened. When there's just no interaction at all. I think that it's not, it's not healthy. Despite my all of, you know, my past actions, and my I think it's not a good idea to be this isolated. It's not. I mean, there's like all kinds of evidence about solitary confinement, with people who are incarcerated, and how is it a madness that ensues from being, you know, isolated for like 23 hours a day, from human contact. So I think, definitely not healthy. But again, I've had the benefit of all this love. I mean, a lot of people who are not partnered, have talked about not hugging anyone and not feeling no touch. That's not been my experience. I've been very privileged in that. I have had the loving touch of my most beloved, every single night. And there's also no upside to be positive. Like normally, I would be sort of, you know, flying into various places in the world to perform. And so I would not have the comfort of my boyfriend every single night. I mean, I've slept with him every single night. In the last year, that is very unusual, because normally I'm traveling, so yeah, positive, just trying to be positive about some of the stuff that is a very positive thing. So yeah, I don't know if I answered maybe, that maybe that was too anecdotal and personal relationships in medical facilities.

M Lamar 38:58

But yeah, it's it's a deeply ambivalent one deeply ambivalent, but I, you know, we're all mortal and, you know, well, our bodies are all sort of slowly decaying, and we'll die. So, you know, got to deal with that, you know, you have to deal with the medical, you know, sort of, and particularly for the people you love, I think when you mean

is loving yourself, but there's also loving the people you love. And I think taking care of yourself is also something that is a loving act to someone else.

Kit Heintzman 39:30

I do want to say that the anecdotal is really important here. And don't worry about whether or not you're answering my questions. Everything you offer is a gift to me to anyone who ends up listening to this. So I do want to say like, not a worry. I'd be interested in hearing what you remember about first hearing about COVID-19

M Lamar 40:01

Um, I think I was. I mean, last year was going to be such a huge year of, like, toric for me. So the year began in January. I was I think the first place I went was London, had a show in London last January. And then I flew to LA and play the show. And then I had a big show here in New York and with man School of Music. This was all January and February, I went to Austin, Texas, to play a show. Um, it wasn't it. So it wasn't till the end in the San Francisco show was was March 2 Or third. I think I first heard it in San Francisco was quite simple. Because may you live I went to college. My undergraduate was done in San Francisco. And but so just the city. I mean, like Market Street DVD, no, San Francisco. Well, or have you? Do you know it at all like to Steven, I did not know it? Well, at all. Well, Market Streets like the Main Street in San Francisco, and now that traffic isn't allowed to sort of move down Market Street, I think for environmental reasons. Maybe you're something so that was very strange. And we were staying in a hotel that was on Market Street. So it was already sort of that, you know, separate for the pandemic. But then, yeah, things were sort of beginning to close down things were beginning to sort of shift. We were still in San Francisco. And I think that the sound person we had for that show that really was really ill during a soundcheck and did not do sound of the show. There was someone else who came in and did our sound. And there was somebody I think they were already rumblings about this thing was COVID-19 thing. And there are questions about whether we should cancel the show whether people would be coming, you know, would they be taking precautions? I think that people were already, this is like March 3, so taking record precautions or thinking about this thing. And we did play the show, and we had a lovely, I think we were sold out, I think and so we're very well, but our sound person was very ill. And, and so I think that at that point, everyone was like worried that touching something with wood, you know, like, if you touched something they touched? That would be a thing. Um, and so, yeah, I mean, it mostly means like, I can't work, you know, like that my way of making money. Having an income, you know, it's just done mostly means that I have no way of making a living mode. That's the primary thing, I think. And it's taken away the great joy of my life, which is performing for audiences in rooms with people. So, yeah, I mean, I think that's the main thing, it seems to me. Certainly, I know, some people who've died. But that's, I mean, it That's complicated. I think that, um, we always have people who die, you know, people always or die. And I don't mean to sound casual about, you know, it's a really big deal that people die. But they always die. Peacefully. I really think that's, that sounds terrible. It's stupid. It's true, though. It is a fact that people always die. And so, um, I I was really trying to focus on on not being one of those people who would die, I was trying to focus really hard on my boyfriend not being one of the people who died in a very selfish way. But they're, you know, the Yeah, I don't know. I mean, it's, it's complicated. It's a really strange time, I don't know, in a way, I don't know what to make of it. Like I sort of would love it to be over just because I need to get back to, you know, doing things that, um, that are meaningful to me, like, traveling, performing, I loved Trump thing before me. Yeah, I'm over it, really over this whole thing. But I'm also like, I think I'm also fearful. Like, I think that I've taken the DIS isolation things so seriously admitted. And then again, I'm generally isolated, but I've taken it to a new level. And I mean, also, I'd be isolated, but I'd be then you know, getting into a car to go get on a plane, you know, it's just a different, like, I'd be in airports, you know, waiting to fly someplace or taking a train

to like a city to perform. So, I mean, even though I'm alone, a lot of the time preparing things or writing or whatever isolating that I need to do to sort of prepare to do what I do, I be going to do what it's like to be interacting with the world, all kinds of different ways.

M Lamar 44:47

And so I think that I've become a little fearful of returning to the or not having, I guess, an excuse around all the social obligations that I like, you know, don't want to Do and you know, I have the greatest excuse now, you know, and I think once this is over, I won't have that same excuse. And so there's, you know, so I think feelings to have about, like not having that great excuse. I think I'm sort of fearful of like, what it means to sort of be with people who are my boyfriend, I think, but I think but I guess like maybe I always have that anxiety, I always have that sort of, you know, but it's funny, because I think that, like, most people, like my boyfriend thinks of me, because he's a very shy person. He's not like, he's not a very social person, either. But like, he thinks of me as an extremely social person, like, I know, lots of people. Like, it's really easy for me to talk to people, you know, like, just sort of. So it's, it's, it's, I mean, it's, like, my lack of interest in being socially, I think, sort of contradicts, like how, I think maybe the world sees me or something. But then, I was thinking about, like, this thing of, like, having abandonment issues, you know, and I think when you've had various kinds of traumas in your childhood, around abandonment by a parent or something, like me, I think that this the, that my clinical knowledge of this is that you either are really clingy, you know, and you become like, sort of this person who like clings on to people desperately, or you're this person who sort of like, you know, just people away, because of fear of event, you know, you know, we definitely be in the latter category of like, sort of, like, no, not like, because to me, like, so pushing away or whatever. And so I think you can be really talkative and, and social seeming, but still not necessarily people get close to you, you know. And so I think that, like, you know, my abandonment of stuff, it's like, God often notch like, in terms of like, you know, just pushing people away, kind of thing. Um, so, yeah, so I think in that sense, it hasn't really helped this whole thing, this COVID thing isn't helped that, does that necessarily mean? I think it's important to be aware of anything, you know, I'm very well aware of why I have abandonment issues. And you know, what, I think the world is generally not a safe place, in terms of human beings, motives. I mean, I think my life is complicated in a way that I'm, like, I don't have like, I'm not actually interested in having friends that I didn't have 10 or 20 years ago. I'm not I mean, I know I have work acquaintances, people that I do business with. I have crews, you know, when I'm shooting something, I have crew, people that are new, that I haven't necessarily worked with before. But in terms of any close friends, I'm just not interested. Like, I just don't, I'm not I'm not interested in sort of like, figuring out what people's motives are with wanting to be friends with me or wanting to talk to me, like, it's just not interesting to me to try to figure that out. You know, because I don't feel a great need to sort of like, welcome lots of new people into my life. Like, I love the people that have in my life. And very few people like me, and people I'm very close to, we're talking like three or four people, you know, like, like, close friends that I'm like, very, you know, intimate with and no, you know, maybe everything about me, maybe they don't even know everything about me. My boyfriend does, but you know, like, with other people, maybe not. But so I mean, I just, yeah, I'm fine with that. I don't really need to widen my circle. But I think it like this whole situation brings up other things about, you know, isolation, and sort of what it means to be with people want to be with people. I mean, generally, I just don't want to be with people. But I do. I mean, I think when I'm performing, I it's the only time I feel like I'm truly in the world. You know, like I like there's a thing that I'm sort of here to do. And I'm doing it, you know, that is what I feel like, I almost feel like a sort of a non entity when I'm not performing. I mean, even even when I'm preparing, like I sort of feel it, you know, like, I'm not really there. It's on some level, like it's not really real, until I'm presenting something in a

formative context, even with the films I'm making, although I guess that I mean, there's a film that I've made called

M Lamar 49:20

Death lessness that's been showing a few places online like in this time, which has helped with like a little income, but um, that doesn't even feel the same way because there's a certain kind of embodiment that comes with like all of the preparation that has to do to like saying, in front of someone and I feel the most embodied I feel the most kind of in just in the world, you know, guests just don't feel like I like I like the world this capitalist, imperialist, capitalist, patriarchal place just doesn't it feels very foreign to me very exploitative and very, you know, it's just generally doesn't interest me actually. But when When I'm performing and putting, like, whatever these ideas are, that I have, these are concepts are things he's beauty, this is my version of Beauty or whatever. I feel as if you know, here I am, I'm contributing to whatever this thing is. And I feel the most alive in the sense of like you having some sense of purpose. So yeah, I think that, yeah, this last year has really stuck with my sense of purpose.

Kit Heintzman 50:29

The 2020 was a pretty big year COVID, but related to a number of other things as hat 2021 is shaping up to be as well. I'm wondering what some of the issues on your mind have been over the course of the last year?

M Lamar 50:45

Mmm hmm. We just had that crazy guy who was like President of the United States. That was, but I mean, honestly, it was, for me, it was less of a concern at the existential level, although many people talked about it as such, like, you know, the sort of Neo fascist threat, you know, which is true. I mean, that's absolutely true. That is absolutely, factually correct. But it was so entertaining, you know, I'm, like, it was such a spectacle. I mean, it concerns me that I speak of it that way. But I think that that is, I mean, our culture is so spectacle, spectaclely. spectacle is that spectively driven like it's so the spectacle is such a thing that is driving so much of commerce, so much of like, you know, the internet scandals, you know, and he was very good at sort of, like, doing scandal and creating spectacle, this is the, you know, the Andy Warhol, you know, those those disaster series things, it's the idea of people can't turn away from an accident, you know, it's bloody and horrible, it's, they want to look at it. They don't Trump this is like, sort of, like acts, this bloody accident you can turn away from, um, and so I was certainly participating in that. But in the spectacle of it, I was trying not to, essentially, it's been very well documented that like social media is so driven by outrage, and maybe this will change in 50 years after years, too. But, um, but then it's outrage driven in terms of clicks, like people maybe are more willing to click on something that they're like, deeply disturbed by, versus something that they love, or would enjoy. And so I try not to sort of participate in that kind of outrage, that sort of manufactured outrage. That sort of like driving me to consumer buy things or, you know, um, but I do think that the internet has been the big I guess, the big issue beyond the the former president united states, I think the internet and what it is doing, to my mind, maybe culture in general, but particularly in my mind, I mean, just being hyper aware of the fact that when I log on to Instagram, or Twitter or Facebook, I'm either being the product that's being sold, or I'm being encouraged to buy something that not having, you know, in in sort of, like my fantasy of DIY spaces, maybe it's maybe I've been naive this whole time, it's that there's something that existed outside of the market where art and music can happen. You know, I do lots of work in in big institutions, which is different. If I'm doing a show at a museum, that's really different, although that that's within a nonprofit space, that's their nonprofit, their sort of ethos. And so I mean, I guess it's the sort of the ground level nonprofit ethos, which is like, you know, basement shows, DIY spaces that, you know, are illegal

spaces. There's that ethos. And then there's the, I guess, when you sort of go further up that the chain of, of, you know, not for profit models, and I guess the museum or the gallery or the Not, not for profit gallery, there's many profit for profit galleries. But I do work primarily in not for profit spaces. And so what's difficult for me, I'm not sort of having access to those kinds of spaces right now is the internet just sort of like living my life. So through the internet, which is just so bought and sold, and it's so consumer oriented and market driven and market tested at all, is that kind of energy is just deeply disturbing to me. And I think that I sort of felt that energy was inevitable, you know, that the culture was inevitably going to move more and more in that direction.

M Lamar 54:24

And I think that this last year has like jumpstarted, that dislike living exclusively through your phone or through your computer, and having your reality kind of like sort of sculpted by that. Um, I find that deeply disturbing. I think that there is there's not room for values that are not capitalist the oriented or market driven, non market values. I think there's no room on the internet for non market values. And so that I think is the thing that's the most concerning about a year like 2020 When we were because we didn't need exist, you know, in real space in real time, we're just living sort of virtually. Um, I think that that is a thing that our culture is gonna have to grapple with in some kind of way. Like, or maybe not. I mean, maybe maybe the thing is the way that it's everything's evolving, maybe it's just not for profit model, because you know, the nonprofit model. I mean, there's a lot of corruption that goes on in terms of 501 season and who gets like funded. And there's a lot of bullshit that happens around that model. And so there could be, it could just not be a thing in the future. It could just not be like DIY spaces. I mean, in places like New York, it's much more difficult. I mean, I guess, the reality is that maybe, you know, maybe it's more about a city like Detroit, where like, you could buy a house for like, you know, \$20 or something. I mean, just because of the way the economy is, like, sort of bottomed out there. Maybe it's just about going to other places that aren't like big cities like New York, because rent is just not affordable, maybe a little more affordable, maybe during the pandemic. I mean, I think that's been one, I think the other positive thing again, I think maybe rents have gone down. Like, I think that it's more maybe a renters market than a landlord market. Because I think that the New York, San Francisco has just been, like, all about landlords just making insane, obscene amounts of money. And so now, I think that, you know, rents have gone down a little bit not, you know, still not affordable, but, you know, they've gone down a little bit. And so. So I think a lot about the political, cultural, social, things like, you know, how do we make room for values that aren't about, you know, profit margins, and like, you know, maximum engagement, or some all, all these kind of capitalist terms? I mean, that when so many individual people on the internet refer to themselves as a brand, my brand, I think that that we're just I mean, you know, I mean, it is what it is, you know, like, I don't I don't, I don't know, I mean, I'm hyper aware of class issues and markets in a way that is not there's a critical relationships here, and I'm not just trying to sort of, like, you know, participate in it, you know, um, so I mean, but I guess I'm not like, I don't, I don't have any positive feelings about. We're all that's go away, in terms of, you know, consumer capitalism, usually, there's some kind of need in my lifetime, it seems that I've always, and I've been, I've been so isolated, I've always been able to find, like, corners, in the places I live, or the cultures that I exist in, there's always quarters when people seem to need something else, beyond the sort of thing that's been marketed to them in that is about consuming and selling, consuming, and being, you know, like, algorithms that like, you know, you look at some like, leather jacket on a website, and then you see it in the app. It's everywhere you like, buy it, buy it, buy it to hyper capitalism, like it's sort of like capitalism, the capitalism on steroids, you know, just seems like the internet is just sort of accelerated, all that sort of thing. I mean, really, oh, he was, he was his speed. I guess he wasn't an acceleration of this, like, in that sense for Leo, but he talked a lot about speed is this thing about speed, I think in the new economies and markets, and I guess the way derivatives are doing about the way the derivatives are

traded, or all kinds of sort of all this kind of speculation that happens on Wall Street. I mean, they have these programs that like trade, within seconds, all these trades happen within seconds of each other sort of like more than a human being could ever do. Like all this kind of stuff that's happening with markets that is very. I mean, yeah, I don't I mean, I'm not like a Luddite, or whatever I've been, I think technology is a great thing. I think, you know, having ability to communicate, you know, globally, within seconds is a really great thing. I think a lot of technologies is very positive. In terms of connecting people with one another. I mean, I wonder what kind of a career I would have if I didn't have my work on platforms like Spotify or YouTube or SoundCloud or Bandcamp I mean, I think that me having a website just wouldn't be enough. You know, I think that it served me I don't I don't want to be completely negative about it. I think it's been great. I communicate a lot when I'm being booked for things through social media websites like people DM me all the time about playing shows on Instagram or in messenger so I don't want to be negative about this stuff. But But

M Lamar 59:44

I mean, yeah, I guess I just log for the Alex there's always the dominant culture and that's not always going to be a thing but I just long for these alternative spaces. Hakeem Bay had this book called immediate ism, but he also said had this book called temporary autonomous zones, like they're within capitalism within within all of this kind of, you know, everything being bought and sold and use value exchange value and what is your value and how you grow your value it you know, you are a commodity and you are a brand, all this, you know, some kind of space. Outside of all that way you're kind of exchanging ideas and your information and or resources, resources, well, what a great idea to share resources, exchange them, exchange art ideas, like something beautiful. Hopefully, outside of all of this, all this madness, that's about profit margins. And, you know, because things are increasingly more corporate, you know, these boardrooms and boards, you know, like Sir shareholders, and shareholders getting like returns quarterly, which is like, a weird when you think about what it means to really grow something over time, like, you can't necessarily get a result of something, you know, in within a quarter, you know, in the semi ideas are abandoned, if they are profitable, within like a certain, you know, immediate kind of model of a corporate thing where it's got these investors need to return now, you know, um, so these things concern me because I, you know, I just think that it has a, there's a suffocation I feel it's going on around other things. But I mean, it comes to be that I'm getting maybe I was, young people are coming up with, like, alternatives to this stuff, and maybe it's going I'm like, getting older now and don't have as much access to all the alternatives that exist. And I haven't been willing to, you know, sell out, you know, like, it's a kid with a corporate program or something, you know, like, I just, I don't I just think I'm made for it. I don't think that there's a new I mean, maybe I would I mean, I guess in I would be nice to have a little more money, you know? Sure. I just don't think I'm really made for. Yeah, corporate culture. If something I made for, but I mean, you know, things can be unlearned, we talked about betas, unlearning, here, second serve motion. I mean, these things can be unlearned. I guess, a lot of work, though. I mean, my most of memory is is to resist all those things. That would be really true. Really unlearning that muscle in getting a new muscle going. There are all kinds of muscles that all kinds of muscles exist. So yeah, guess who knows?

Kit Heintzman 1:02:29

May I ask. Yeah. I asked what health means to you.

M Lamar 1:02:37

Um, I mean, it's mostly, I think, I think of it primarily at the psychological and emotional level, at the spiritual level. I mean, that's the first thing I think about, I mean, certainly, there's all the physical stuff, you know, you

want to not have cancer and, you know, have low breast, you know, normal blood pressure, low cholesterol, all these things. But I mean, the primary thing that I think about, and I think the focus of a lot of the work that you personally for myself, for my own personal well being, and, and even in my work is about psychological, emotional, and spiritual well being and health. And so I think there's a lot of sort of intergenerational trauma that I've tried to deal with in my work. And that's the subject of one of the documentaries I want to make. My grandfather grew up in a sharecropping situation, he was a black man who was born in like 1918, in Alabama, and was brutally, sort of lots of abusive, violent things happened to him, at the hands of the white landowners when he was growing up, and so he grew up to be a very horribly abusive man horribly, I mean, a terrible, terrible person really. And, you know, sort of transferred a lot of that'd be so my mother and my mother, you know, was, you know, really horrible in many ways, in terms of the legacies of that abuse, and so, I'm very interested in what it means to sort of be able to heal from all that like to sort of like not carry that level of abuse, you know, to like, next generations and sorts of things. That's a focus for me. I mean, it means a lot of sort of grappling with that history. So at the psychological emotional level, the spiritual level, I'm dealing with my own kinds of, you know, obsessions, or like, or addictions or whatever, you know, like sort of having a healthy relationship to sex and food. I'm one that isn't obsessive. So I mean, health ism. I mean, the primary thing I think of is it's a spiritual thing. I mean, certainly I exercise every day and you know, sort of trying to do cinematic cardio. I'm trying to get more weight training in my routine but I mean, I'm do the cardio like, I love jump rope. Jumping jacks, anyway, but um, it's a primary purpose. Primarily a spiritual thing I think I think in for me, it's a lot of work to kind of to be well, spiritually and emotionally, psychologically, I think that's a lot of labor. But I mean, I think the good news is that I can do a lot of that labor on my own. I mean, I think my therapist is helpful, sometimes, sometimes not at all, but often very helpful. But I can do a lot of that work on my own. I, there's a lot of books one can read about being well, I actually have a band of 12 Step programs, I think they're helpful in terms of tools, you know, one can get sometimes I think that it depends on kind of therapy, I guess everything somatic therapy, you can, there's much more like sort of tool oriented, I have like shitty insurance, I can't afford a really great therapy. I have like, so I have no sort of, I would say subpar therapy. But I guess it's better than nothing. So, but yeah, the people I know with money, have fabulous therapists, and we have all kinds of really great conversations about the tools that he gets. With a really great therapy, um, see other really great therapists don't take insurance. Even if you had the best insurance in the world, they don't actually take insurance. Um, so I mean, I think that like being well, or health, you know, for me, it's about the psychological emotional seven. So there's, there's a lot of luckily, a lot of resources one can gather on one's own. A lot of ebooks, one can get for free, you can buy PDFs of books, even if you don't have money. I mean, I'm always interested in being able to do things without money, you know. And so if you have an internet connection, which also costs money, but I mean, maybe you go to a library or something, and you find books by Brene, brown, or various kinds of other self help books that can help you be better. In terms of your emotional, psychological and spiritual health, um, so primarily means to me like yeah, being being having your like, shit together with with regard to the amazingness of your, of your psyche of your spirit. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 1:07:10

May I ask what safety means to you?

M Lamar 1:07:21

I don't know if it means anything to me. Um, I mean, my sort of my knee jerk reaction is to have no, there really is if you and I talked earlier about the city feeling safe to me. But that's relative to nature, which feels very unsafe, like extremely unsafe, but I don't know how safe to really feels, you know? Like, I don't know if I feel if I don't

know if it exists, really. Um, I. I mean, I think a lot of the anxiety that like white men seem to be having at this cultural moment, seems to be about like, the sort of lack of safety they have. And it's a shocking to them. I think that so many question. I didn't know anything about their existence, and I think it's very unsettling for them. But I'm, you know, black queer. I'm goth. I mean, this is, yeah, I've never felt safe. Really. I feel safer in cities. I feel safer in my home with my door locked, you know, not interacting with the world. But I don't feel safe. So yeah, I mean, I think it doesn't mean anything to me. I think it's, um, I think we just, we just try to get along, but get on with the whole thing, but I don't feel it doesn't mean yeah, it's kind of meaningless to me, I guess, maybe just safer safeties when safety mean. Yeah, I mean, I guess it's, it doesn't seem to mean anything but safer, I guess, that I would be in a certain situation like it's, it's all relative, right. Safer relative to being in this situation, you know, I feel maybe safer, you know, having a place to live as opposed to being homeless, like I feel safer, but not completely safe. I think that there's no safety really in capitalism, unless you're like a huge, huge amounts of money, but, but maybe that's not really safe, either. I mean, maybe you're constantly of losing that money and losing the resources that allow for you to, I don't know, have a safer existence. Yeah. Safety, I think is. Yeah, I mean, the whole Safe Space thing, all of it. Yeah, I think it's kind of meaningless. And I don't think there's any safety really like there's I mean, because we all we know we're all gonna ultimately die get sick. You know, whatever. I mean, in in there, all kinds of horrible things that happen. You know, some people die in the hands of police officers or like, you know, hate crimes or people are murdered because of who they are. Because they're black and because they're Jewish because they're Asian or because they're transgender or something. So, um, there is no safety. There's no safety, safety is a myth. Oh, maybe I am, I think that a lot of the um, I mean, there are lots of people in I guess on my side of things I would call myself because, you know, they're people of color. They're people who advocate for justice question. Justice is also very elusive thing that does. And who's who tried to create safe spaces and this kind of kind of thing. I just have never believed I mean, I think that we all need to be nurtured and cared for and deeply loved. I think every human being needs to be nurtured, cared for and deeply loved. And so I think some movement towards creating safer spaces, I think is admirable. I think that, um, yeah, I think that, um, it's maybe not really possible. I mean, I think there are people doing all kinds of work in organization organizing, like politically, and sort of mentally, especially people who like, you know, volunteer for rape crisis, a quick crisis, senators who volunteered suicide prevention lines, people who are their primary activities, like going to protests, these are my friends, some of these people are, my dear friends, they spend all their time and just sort of advocating against gentrification in various neighborhoods, like, it's been other time advocating for like, you know, trans people getting health care and trans people, you know, not being put in populations in prison that don't reflect their gender identity, you know, um, there are people who do this work all the time.

M Lamar 1:11:50

And it's extraordinary to me that they have the mental facility to keep going with something that is, so there's so unrewarding in as much as the result, you're sort of always hitting your head against a brick wall, you know, these people who are doing this work, but, um, but I think that maybe, maybe it's the thing that cuz, you know, there's one person you can help, you know, maybe literally, quite literally a life, you could say, with this work. And I mean, I would imagine that would be worth it like that, that's must be really satisfying to know that you, as much as you mostly aren't succeeding at this thing, you know, like, the people who have like, sort of put me knocking their heads against the wall, trying to get some kind of sense of justice for groups of people in these small ways. Mostly hit your head against the wall, but then maybe there's some person who, you know, you find a place for them to live or, you know, assist them in finding a job or getting some kind of job training to do a thing in their life. Or maybe you are able to get them hormones, if they're transgender, or you're able to get them. I mean, it

must be that must be really, like, that must be the thing that drives you when that you can have these small victories and in helping individual people, you know, that the system is. Yeah, deeply flawed, and seemingly irredeemable, you know, again, you know, these muscle memories can you know, change, you know, that you can retrain these things, you can get into different habits, but, you know, it's a very difficult thing. And so, um, I think that, so I, I would never, I guess, I feel like I was being very timid, or approaching being critical of people who were doing a kind of work that I could never do, I don't have the, I'm not emotionally strong enough to do it. So I would always want to defer to people who are doing the undergrad on the ground work around all of these safe spaces when I don't personally believe that they're safe spaces or that that's the thing. But there are people who are doing work or advocating for this kind of thing. Who know me find the language useful in your are doing much better people than I. So yeah, I guess I'll defer to them and just shut up on that one. Yeah, I have no more to say about that.

Kit Heintzman 1:14:10

How are you feeling about the immediate future immediate however you define it?

M Lamar 1:14:17

Well, there's a place that I order food from a place for which I order food. And I'm going to do that as soon as we like in this conversation is just really fantastic food. And so the most immediate future I am very excited about eating this food that I had to do after you work on this other grant and I'm applying for to make to get funding to make this documentary that I want to make one of them that I want to make. Um, and then I have to do some, some more scales and some more singing. So I feel really great about all of that mean immediate future. This is like what I'm doing after I end my call with you. And I feel great about all these things. I feel really good excited about them. I really like a fantastic logline. Before we start talking for this grant, for the for the documentary I want to make, I was very excited about that. I mean, I luckily enjoy the things that I the things that I've chosen to do, like, you know, it's performing right now. But it's practicing music, it's playing everyday, it's seeing it play the piano every day, singing every day, I enjoy those things greatly. Sometimes they're frustrating, you know, it's difficult and frustrating. I have been enjoying writing grants, which is, this is a very new thing. I have not until maybe, September of last year ever in my life, enjoy writing the grant. Um, somehow, I found joy in that. And so yeah, I It's shocking, really, it's, it's kind of a really humiliating and demoralizing thing I found, historically, but like, lately, I found it to be a great way to really clarify what you want to do with the project in a way that, um, in terms of the language, you know, with the language terms, at least trying to sort of like really crystallize an idea and what your intention is, what your work is about. When you're artists, I think that you're asked to write about what you do, and to describe your practice a lot, and what you want to do with your practice, and what kind of impact you'd like it to have, and these grants always ask for that. I mean, there's no, I mean, this is the impact we'd like it to have in the imaginary whatever sphere of our imaginations, but then, you know, the world is, you know, the reality of that impact is, it's always something different. Um, but I've somehow found a joy in writing things. So I mean, my immediate the immediate things, I'm going to continue working on these things, and I feel very excited about working on these things. Um, I don't know if I can even think beyond that. Really. Um, I. Yeah, I mean, I said, I mean, I think I feel really positive about Yeah, this very immediate stuff I'm gonna be doing with this day. And these are multiple day projects, you know, that these deadlines are coming up, but they're not like tomorrow. So I'll be continuing to work on you know, this grant writing for the next you know, I think month actually. And then I'll be thinking every day, I'll be eating hopefully really great food every day. This is a privilege. I'm very grateful for being able to eat really, you know, really fantastic food that I don't prepare myself, because I don't I don't have that gene of cooking. Um, so yeah, I feel really great about the the immediate. Yeah,

the next thing or the immediate future, I feel very positive about it. I would like to get I mean, I know you're asking about this virus or whatever. I mean, I would like to get a vaccine. I'm not like old enough. I haven't been. I'm not like a central worker. And I'm not old enough to get one yet. You know, so I don't have any underlying medical conditions, which is a really fantastic thing. You knock on wood. They'll have underlying health condition. So I haven't qualified to get one so far. Do you have you gotten one yet? and Canada? Do they just give it to people?

Kit Heintzman 1:18:08

Canada is very far behind on our vaccine schedule. It's part of the complicated politics of comparing things in Canada and the US. We're hoping to be where you are. What your May 1 goal is our September goal.

M Lamar 1:18:25

Wow. Wow. Maybe that's why I had a show scheduled in Canada for April, something that was cancelled. Yeah, I mean, yeah. I can't be rescheduled for fall. Music Montreal. I love Montreal. I had such a great time. Last time I was there. And yeah, I guess. I'm not going. But um, so yeah, I mean, I think that's the I mean, yeah, I guess the grass is always greener. I mean, this. I mean, the free market thing that's going on here is just obscene. I mean, it's just it's so perverse in it. It's utterly inhumane, you know, the free markets, it's just inhumane and dehumanizing consistently, but certainly, I guess there's a slow plod that must happen, you know, when the government is much more involved in things is assisting with a I mean, I mean, I would probably still choose your option and didn't miss like option which is like so utterly dehumanizing and lacking and dignity. And it's just the survival of the fittest Darwin this like sort of ethos like it's just, I just find this objectionable. I've never thought about leaving this country expatriating myself and going, but I haven't figured out where I want to go yet. Who would have me take me in what country would take me? Um, yeah, I've gotten no sufficient answer to that question yet. And I have a boyfriend and and you know, both of us leaving. It's complicated. Um, but yeah, so um, I guess I'm still asking answering that question about the immediate future. Yeah, I would love to have vaccines, I would love to kind of get, I don't want to really attempt to sort of start traveling again until, you know, I've got like, some sort of that safety net. Like, I feel we feel much better about it kind of move it. I mean, and again, like, no one's booking me. So I mean, I usually only travel when I'm playing shows. I don't just like, I don't take holidays, you know, like, that kind of person. So I'm the traveling with you. Yeah. It's common. Yeah. I mean, I guess it would, I would be like, sort of clear to do things in places, I guess, if I got vaccinated. So yeah, I would like to have that happen. As soon as possible. I have a doctor's appointment Wednesday, which is to come back on my prep that the whole sort of prep thing. So I'm back in that three months, like sort of scenario. And so part of why I wanted to get back on the three most scenarios just to be in the healthcare loop, you know, like regularly said, like, like, I can go in and get like, you know, I'm getting a checkup and I'm getting there, check my sort of blood or whatever, for the how the prep thing is working, then maybe Oh, yeah. Do you wanna get the vaccine? I'm hoping to happen. Like, I just have this fantasy, but they'll be like, Oh, yeah. Do you want to go and get that vaccine? You know, because it's a health care provider anyway, that may not happen, because I'm still not in the group of people who qualify, but then then all these people I know, who are like, even younger than me, who aren't essential workers who have been getting themselves. I'm hoping to happen. So um, yeah, the immediate I feel pretty, I mean, it's strange. It's sort of not positive. As much as many of the things are in my life. I'm generally like, I think, an optimistic person I more optimistic, maybe. That's not true. I'm definitely optimistic. I'm definitely not pessimistic. I think I'm somewhat reasonable based on facts. And I'm genuinely genuinely excited about what I'm doing. I'm like, I think that my I can be enthusiastic about life as much as I'm enthusiastic about the things I'm doing. The things I'm working on. And I'm generally I've been, I guess, I'm lucky that I've been consistently enthusiastic about what I'm

working on. In my life, and in my private in the privacy of, you know, you know, my studio I'm, like, very excited about writing grants of all things. No, lately in my, in my practice, and the new music I'm writing and the documentaries I'm working on, yeah, I'm I feel great in a way. I do. It sounds like a weird thing to say, I feel I was guilty saying it. But um, but I think this is generally a feeling. I mean, I certainly have bad days, I'm depressed a lot. Have a lot of doubt, you know, but like, I just, you know, there's no way we don't have a choice, but to sort of proceed. Yeah, and so. But when I start working on the things, I'm like, you know, proceeding doing I'm very excited. When I'm in the midst of the work, it's, yeah.

M Lamar 1:23:08

I'm filled with like it because it means I guess working on something is always about possibility. I mean, when you're creating something, there's always like, it's always kind of it feels infinite. You know, I think that when you're an artist, there's always like, yeah, just the, the birth of something feels like an infinite thing. I mean, a new life. It's like a child being born, I guess, you know, when when a child is, is welcome, when you really excited about it, you know, many people have children, and they're, like, maybe not too excited about it, which is a bad idea, obviously. But I mean, you know, but when a child is like, you know, when you're planning for and you're excited, I mean, the the possibilities are infinite, endless. I mean, that's the thing about the embryonic process of making something, you know, the possibilities are really endless. And so then you just, you know, when you're, when you have a mind that is wants infinite possibility, then you, I don't know, you can just be kind of excited. And then me you have a disability, I know, life is full of disappointment, and like, you know, maybe the project didn't do what you wanted to do or didn't have the impact. Now, these grants, it might impact you, I mean, maybe it's having you back do you want it to have but it's really, it's a great thing to just constantly be in that in that space of like, I'm gonna make this new thing and it's gonna like do all this stuff and it's gonna I mean, at the very least change your life you know, it I think that the changes you would you can want from an artwork for your life or spiritual, psychological, emotional. They're also static, they're also about the craft your craft. Like getting to higher levels and whatever the craft in which you're engaged is a very satisfying it's an easy you know, to get to those higher levels. It's a lot of work and so I'm excited to always have something to work on you know, like it's, it's given craft is an endless kind of pursuit, you can always get better at something, the craft or something. And so what a wonderful thing, you know, just to have this infinite kind of work that you do that is aspirational. That's about, you know, beauty and transcendence. I mean, what more could one really want out of a life, you know, being deeply connected spiritually to yourself. And then, you know, by extension to other people, you know, being deeply spiritual and connected to yourself means that you're connected to the humanity of everyone else. And you're like, sort of, in a process of, you know, trying to create something beautiful, something transcendent, relative to that process of your oneness with other human beings, is, you know, the greatest thing really, any human being could be in pursuit of it. So how wonderful, I don't see how, in a way, one who's making something can't be pretty enthusiastic about it now optimistic or pessimistic, or even hopeful Cornel West always talks about hope, it'll be a prisoner of hope, I don't even know if I'm hopeful. I just, I'm, I'm just excited. Like, I'm just excited about this thing that I'm working on. That's all like that simple.

Kit Heintzman 1:26:20

We're in a moment where there's a lot of conversation around self care. And I'm wondering if you'd be willing to share some of the ways that you've been attempting to care for yourself in this moment.

M Lamar 1:26:36

Exercise is really important to me, um, I fall down a little bit, some days on exercise. But generally, I like to do about 200 Jumping Jacks a day. I know, it sounds like corny, jumping jacks. But like, I usually get this. When I get to about 100, like 90-95 Jumping jacks, there's a, there's this like, endorphin rush that happens to me. And then if I could push through to 200, like I just get high that, that there's just a chemical high that I get from that, that is really helpful. For the energy, I need to get all of those things that I'm excited about going on those things throughout the day. So the exercise is really helpful. Like, I mean, you know, I'm veins, I want to look good, but really, it's so not about that right now. For me, it's really about the mental part of it. I'm jumping rope, also to like, I love jump rope, like that also gives me a similar, it's just slightly different than jumping jacks. But it gives me a similar endorphin rush that, um, it's just great. Like, it helps me you know, what's in to the things I have to attend to, like, you know, being enthusiastic about writing a grant or just sitting at the keyboard for hours, like practicing scales. So, I mean, when those days when I'm depressed, like, like, it it's difficult to get it back because I think there have been a lot more of those I think this year than normal just because of the nature of you know, how everyone's life has just been, you know, sort of stopped. Like I like i There have been days where I've like sung myself out of bed when I start singing something that is going to be useful to my spirit, some piece of music usually a spiritual usually like a you know, maybe it's Oh, freedom or Amazing Grace. Deep River is another one I love. Because I always think of the river as being about death, you know, that negro, spiritual rights economic spiritual, Deep River, I think about it being very much about death. But I've, you know, there have been many days when I have I've sung myself out of bed. And that is so I guess I encourage singing for everyone. Um, I mean, certainly everyone's not like, you know, like, a good singer. But I don't really think it's about that. I think there's something about inhaling a huge amount of air and exhaling. I mean, like, this is what we do in meditation, you know, and I do that too. I love the sky. I love like right now I have in my studio, there's a there's no curtain. So I love looking at the sky. Okay, the desk is situated in a way that like and my keyboard and Mikey works in the opposite way the window so I could be sitting at the keyboard or sitting in my desk and just looking at the sky, whether the sky is gray or whether it's blue. I love it. No, I hate the sun. Let's be very clear about that. I hate the Sun which is in the sky. So you know, the Sun Life is full of contradictions. But the sky I feel is a really rejuvenative thing. I feel like it's it provides energy and life and sustenance for me. My friend calls me he's a theologian, actually. He calls me a sky worshiper. He's a very very very serious like the ology person. He's well he's he's one of a kind So actually, he says, I mean, when at the time we met, he was at Berkeley, in California, and he was studying like, law and philosophy. I think that was when Judy Butler was it. I don't know. She's deliberately anyway, she was working with her, and a really brilliant person. He's really brilliant person. And, and then so then he became a law professor. And he was doing that for a few years. And then he realized that he knew he had a calling to sort of do this theology thing and so he was like, stop being a law professor, which pays a lot of money by the way, do you know how much law professors get paid? Like starting but he was constitutional law he was a constitutional law professor anyway, so he was like, I'm not gonna do that anymore. Cuz it just, you know, follow this some kind of God thing. And so, yeah, he's saying theology. Now he's a, you know, very, very serious rigorously a theologian. He was at Union Theological Seminary briefly before James Cohn, the great, great, great, James co died, who is one of my greatest inspirations. The work of James Gunn, particularly the cross the Lynching Tree, I mean, his seminal book, right, Black Power, black liberation of black power, that led 68 certainly is usually important, but also the Cross and the Lynching Tree. Hugely important to me in my work, but it's my friend got to say with James CO, which is amazing.

M Lamar 1:31:09

He calls me a sky worshiper anyway, just to give you his credentials as a person who understands these sorts of things. Um, so yeah, the sky I find very useful in terms of self care. And I was I was gonna go into the diatribe

about how everyone should sing. Because you're, you're inhaling lots of air, and then you're exhaling and slowly, which is what they talk about in meditation, you inhale, and you exhale on like, three or four, eight, or whatever. I mean, that you're, you're exhaling, making noise, hopefully on pitch, but if you can't do that, then you know, you can just exhale making noise. And it's very exhilarating. And when the air when there's these deep breaths taken in this air, that is, you know, exhaled over the soft palate, it hits places in your head that just feel good. It's not unlike that feeling I have when I hit about 90 to 100 Jumping jacks in like, I get like high, there is a there's a high you can get from just singing. And it's about, it's about the air. It's about that inhalation and exhalation. It's really, it's a, it's very exciting. It's a very, this is a personal level, just a very selfish level. It's a very exciting thing. But everyone can do that. Like I mean, you know, it doesn't mean that you're going to make a lovely sound, necessarily, but it's a wonderful thing. If you can think about it as a meditation. You think about this deep, inhaling in a deep way, like when you're expanding your ribcage. And then you're sort of you're into your abdominal muscles in your back, you want to, you know, expand with all the back muscles as well. And then you slowly exhale making a sound like maybe it's, you know, amazing grace or something. Is it a really fantastic thing? You know, myself care, I really find something useful. But I mean, there's also like, I mean, I think that there's also like, sort of like, doing work with a therapist is helpful, like talking through very specific issues with, you know, maybe my abandonment stuff, maybe my other stuff, you know, some you're having difficulty with, I think that I really believe in therapy, I really believe in 12 Step programs, 12 Step programs are free therapy is not. I think that's self care. That is also the thing that you should humanize, you don't have to speak at this 12 Step groups. I mean, I don't think it's always necessary to go have a confessional moment. And these contexts, but I think that it's something that can be useful for you, because you have people grappling with whatever their particular issue is, and talking about tool, talk to confessing that there is an issue, but then it's also talking about the tools they're using to manage it. Because we need tools, you know, like, there's one thing to know your fucked up, which we all are, because we're human beings, but there's nothing to have tools to sort of address that. And so I think the 12 step groups are really great at giving you tools. And you can have, I mean, there's all this like God, stuff that like, you know, repels a lot of people. But I think you could have your own relationship to like this higher power question. In that context. I mean, a higher power can be you know, I don't know, anything outside of yourself, I think it's a good idea to sort of surrender to the idea that, you know, they're just the idea that there are things beyond your control, that you are going to die for some unknown reason, you know, that your mother is going to die, that your children are gonna die, they might die before you or I mean, you know, maybe your spouse is good. I mean, these are the questions of life that we have to have some way that I mean, some religion is great at that, really, I mean, religion has issues but spirituality I think, deep ways get you addressing these questions when things I always like to talk about in a really intense way as the negro spiritual and how the spiritual was so brilliant at addressing there's all these deep, sort of like spiritual existential concerns in black life. Spirit before, I mean, certainly with religion, but this, these were also abolitionist like songs, these are also the songs about like, sort of like, this is how, where the meeting is going to happen. And this is how you can sort of, you know, survive as you sort of run away or like this, these are tunes that were like a part of the Underground Railroad towards freedom, I think there's so many things going on. And that music that, that my people sort of, like, formed as a survival mechanism is survival isn't just about eating the basic things like food and clothing and shelter, but it's about surviving at the spiritual level, at a deeper level, so I'm a proponent of anything that really helps you. Not so much drugs, I think drugs, people use those to help them themselves. And I just think that they create other problems.

M Lamar 1:35:50

And so I think that also maybe is there a way to not deal with something, too, now, again, I'm not judgmental about, like drinking or drugs or whatever, you know, that's the best you can do, then, you know, go for it, at least there's some kind of addressing of it. But I think that ultimately you're, you know, you're with different kinds of problems. If you're self medicating, which, you know, again, you know, harm reduction, if you're aware of that, and that's the best you can do, then, you know, go for it. Again, no judgment for me, but I'm self care is it's, it has to be an individual thing, like, whatever you, whatever is gonna work best for you. I mean, for me, exercise has been really great. With therapy is great. To all step situations are great. And they've been, you can do those virtually right now to like, you could go to meetings virtually, um, and in this whole singing thing, where you're like, I mean, in my case, I spend hours a day singing. So like, I've spent hours a day taking these huge breaths, the thing I sort of, like, sustained because when you're singing, you don't just like, let the breath go all at once you're like, sort of sustaining that breath, you know, sort of to make sound, you know, because singing is essentially exhaling, making noise on pitch, you know, so you're sustaining that breath. And that's, you know, like, that's a great thing. Like I say, emotion, just that the emotional spiritual level, is some kind of spiritual program is a useful thing, even for, for atheist, like some kind of, maybe it's just meditation, maybe it's just like, you know, there's nothing, you know, there was nothing was in there's nothing, I mean, whatever, whatever it is, if you're an atheist, I mean, I'm kind of like, I think getting in touch with breath is a really useful thing. Because it is, you know, like, I love people talk about music in terms of the heartbeat, you know, because I think a lot of in terms of rhythm, and rhythm is a very important part of music. But I think the most important part is the breath. Like the air that we need to sort of sustain a sound or a life. Certainly a heartbeat is important, but the breath is, I guess, equally important. I mean, I think any most musicians will tell you, they're equally important, I put more importance on Well, I also don't like to be regulated, in terms of beats, you know, like, I don't like drummers who try to keep me in time, like being in my own time. And I like to be able to flow it Roboto or fermata, these are, these are musical terms, but you know, when you just sort of tomatoes, when you hold it longer than it's written, and Roboto was when you might speed up or slow down in your rhythms. And you know, what I like to do a lot in music and in life speed up and slow down, or I might like to hold a particular phrase or a particular note for longer that is written, you know, I love those things, but then you can't do any of those things without breath without like, a sustained kind of control of the airflow. So yeah, I'm really into breath. And I'm not interested in like, you know, being is much in rhythm with other people, at least, you know, like, because you can have your own rhythm, you know, that is that is to be, you know, because Roboto doesn't like, completely negate the rhythm. It just, you know, allows room to sort of speed up or slow down within, within the rhythm.

Kit Heintzman 1:39:09

I'm at the penultimate question. So we know we're in this moment where there's this flurry of biomedical and scientific research. I'm wondering what you think that people in the humanities and the social sciences could be doing right now to help us understand this moment?

M Lamar 1:39:30

And no idea. I'm, I'm not interested in I guess it because I'm not interested in people who are making work I mean I'm an artist so I mean, maybe sort of papers or archives about this moment are many more useful to this process than like a work of art. It's about that I guess it's specifically about the pandemic, maybe. I mean, I obviously I'm always, interested in art that's about isolation. I'm always interested in art that's about. alienation feeling is if you don't have a place in the world are feeling lost or essentially destitute, like I'm always interested in work about that stuff. And so, I think that there's a heightened specificity around the pandemic that is about all of those things while listening to, you know, get turned up to like 100 or 1000. But I think that, um, and I guess, and I, I don't

know, I don't understand, I guess the role of art, you know, because even though I make recordings, and I make film and video, there's some kind of there's a nourishment that happened sonically, and acoustically when sound just being made in a room. And, and when you're in the room where the sound is being made, there's no experience like that. And so I feel a great sense of loss, like not, from not being able to only not be able to make that happen myself. But being able to experience it from other musicians, like being able to be in a room with a violin is making a sound is the most amazing thing ever. I mean, an acoustic contra bass, you know, it's being bowed is one of my favorite moments, favorite sounds, ever, you know, whenever and I love the recordings of those sounds. But being in a room with them, I mean, it's a different spiritual thing. I mean, there's a different kind of air acoustic instruments, a lot, air, whatever the air is moving, even if they're not wind instruments, like a flute or, or, or a saxophone or clarinet or something. I mean, the air moves through the body of the instrument, if it's a guitar and acoustic guitar, or, or a violin or Viola, I just. So I, I just think so I mean, I guess despair at the loss of the experience of being able to be in a room with a sound that's, that's that extraordinary is made is I just had a deep and profound sadness that I have, that I wouldn't be able to experience that like to be in a room when that kind of sound is being made. And to be able to make that kind of sound in a church, I love performing in churches, whether it's the kind of acoustic disciplines, issue project room here in New York has a great acoustic to it, there's a great echo of the space. And I'm and yeah, I just, I mean, so despair. I mean, I think that like to be able to speak to the despair of the, because a lot of people talking about the loss of touch. And again, I get I can't relate to that, because I have my touch, but the loss of sound, because record music, I mean, there's a very famous essay, by Walter Benjamin called the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, that you have to read, like, you know, constantly when you're in art school, I was article for, like, I don't know, like nine years of my life, 10 years of my life or something. So I've read it over and over and over again. And he talks about this loss of aura, you know, the, in the mechanical reproduction, that is heightened. The second to like so new heights, when you think about recording music, it there's such a seven in digital music, even I mean, it's such a loss of all of the experience you could have with with being in a room with a voice is making a sound, when an instrument being said, there's nothing like that there's no nothing can replace that nothing can reproduce that. So there's a deep kind of sorrow, maybe maybe people are speaking, making work or, or writing papers about the deep and profound sorrow and despair at the loss of this kind of beauty of this kind of existential experience. I mean, to me, to experience music, in a particular kind of holy environment is, is the ultimate kind of existential experience. And so to not be able to, like have that as human being, as someone who's breathing and feeling deeply. And I mean, I listened to my favorite opera singers sing all the time recording. I mean, it's really a wonderful thing. But it's not the same thing as being in a room when a voice is making a sound. And so I mean, speaking to this moment, you just, I just, it's just despair. There's despair and grief, profound grief. And I think a lot of people speak to it, you know, if you lost it, you know, your most beloved person, your mother, your father, your child in this, like, there's that kind of grief too, you know, and I think grief is always applicable. I mean, a lot of our work is about grief.

M Lamar 1:44:32

Because I mean, yeah, there's, there's always like, there's always loss. I mean, loss is a thing with being alive. There's always something like degree of loss that we're having to like, negotiate. But yeah, I mean, like, like, it's like, it's like the birds. Like just not having that that sound of them singing suddenly that they were all the birds in the world were dead. Like, you just couldn't hear that sound that they would make. I mean, which is an That is that is what is going on right now to all the birds have died grief.

Kit Heintzman 1:45:13

Here's my last question. So this is an oral history interview. And I'm wondering if you could speak to historians of the future? What kinds of things would you want to make sure weren't forgotten about this moment?

M Lamar 1:45:31

Well, I would hope that this moment would allow us to really value what it means to be in a space. With someone making an extraordinary sound. I would I would hope that the love for being in a room when that sound is being made and acoustic sound is heightened. I think I would love it if there's a greater appreciation for acoustic music I mean, I just mean he can be amplified, but it'd be made from acoustic instruments. Because I mean, I'm always amplified, but it's my favorite moments with acoustic music that the violin was like, Amplified, the piano was amplified, but the one can experience be in a space where you can experience these things, I would just I would hope that there's always a great appreciation for that. I guess a lot of people who play acoustic instruments worry with technology, you know, all the things you can do with computers and music, I think some of us may be worried about the urgency and the primacy of, of people wanting the experience of being in a room in a space where, you know, certain kinds of sounds are made, I would I would hope that there's always an appreciation for certain kinds of sounds being being in a room when they're being produced not just hearing them on a recording or in a video or something but be really be able to like soak in the Sonic delight of having the sound like nose resonating in a space there's something very holy about that experience in this thing. It's like I think there's like angels or how you know when a violin is in a particular register or a voice or even a guitar actually there's there was one of the my favorite performances was with the factor first my complete blank right now, I'm just show with there's some more and there's some morphing from Sonic Youth using a slag guitar thing and in the saxophone, really prominent avant garde saxophonist from since the 80s, he's still around doing amazing music anyway isn't it will come to me, one of the best shows are very experienced there was thinking about the feedback, just the feedback, the sonic places the feedback from the guitar was hitting. And John Zorn, God John, so hard to get the sax was was matching was matching the pitch of the feedback, which is really this high frequency feedback was one of the most existential experiences I've ever had with music. And it was with sound really, and it was a really, when the certain frequencies happening, you just feel as if no angels are dancing in a room. I feel it's just the most wonderful thing that you just, and I've seen one of the my favorite performances ever seen TV, I was in the room with it, it had an absolutely transcendent experience. And then later I'd saw this and we put it on YouTube. I was like, oh my god, this is the most amazing show I've ever seen. And so I went to YouTube, and I listened to it. And I was like, Well, this is good. But this isn't the same thing. So I would hope that there is a love for the experience of being weird. Because you really are with someone as they're creating something you're in a space. When something is being born, I guess it's like, you know, if you're in the room, if you're a father or something in the room as your baby, or mother, um, Senator, I mean to be heteronormative if you're a mother in the room with, you know, when your and your wife is giving birth or something or your two men watching your surrogate give birth, and I mean, there's something about, like watching something happen, like in time, experiencing your it's like you're all doing it together in a way. I mean, the musicians are spent 1000s and 1000s of hours preparing this moment for you, but that it's happening in the room with you. It's becomes collaborative, in that sense. And there's nothing like that experience of being in a room when a thing is happening. I think it's really an extraordinary experience.

M Lamar 1:49:41

And so I I I pray that that there's still some value that the culture has in that experience because I the evidence would suggest that it's not a thing that will continue to be valued, or maybe it's just gonna be a smaller audience and I'm fine with that. I mean, it doesn't have to be massive. So people who are enjoying that, you know, like, I've

played a very small audience before and had the most amazing experience. I've been to shows where I'm, like one of very few people in the audience and had the most amazing experience. And the musician I've had had had the privilege of speaking, speaking to the musician after that, and they had the most amazing experience. I mean, it can, it can be exchanged between just two people, you know, three people. That's extraordinary. And so, you know, that'd be a mass movement. But I just, I guess, I pray that there's always an appreciation for that, because this moment is about a profound like sense of loss and grief and despair, because it hasn't been able to be president to happen. Zoom concerts concert on Twitch, God does a YouTube did not count.

Kit Heintzman 1:50:47

I want to thank you so very much for everything that you shared today. And at this point, I just want to invite if there's anything you want to say that my questions haven't given you the space to address to present you with that space now.

M Lamar 1:51:00

I think I've said everything. I think I've said everything I need to say.

Kit Heintzman 1:51:06

Perfect. Thank you so much for your time.

M Lamar 1:51:09

Thank you. Bye