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“Transing” the time of music through the life and works of Beverly Glenn-Copeland

Dana Levy

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Introduction

For Beverly Glenn-Copeland, “*It’s all about time.*”¹ He says, “We don’t know what the timing for anything is. We don’t know the timing of our death, our children, when they will appear to us; our perfect mate or several perfect mates. We don’t know anything, really. We think we do, but there’s a purpose to each life, and for some people it’s not revealed immediately. For some people, it’s revealed very early. For some people, it’s revealed again and again as they go along. For me, that purpose has only recently been revealed.”² A Black transmasculine musician and composer known to most as just “Glenn,” Glenn-Copeland’s life is pervaded by this muddled sense of time, from his late-in-life transition to his ethereal, genre-bending music. He has an explicitly *trans* sense of time. He is an elder, but his presence is one of youthful exuberance, his joy of living at once obvious and infectious. At 74 years old, his hair forms a soft, gray halo on his head; he habitually wears a blue button-down belted into slacks, and a blue silk tie printed with two ghostly wolves howling at the moon. Glenn-Copeland’s unique subjectivity and lived experience as a Black trans man pervades his life and his music, eliding the boundaries between the two and making any distinction obsolete.

Music written, performed, and produced by trans people must be analyzed through a practice of musicology that intentionally centers trans subjectivities. Until this point, trans music scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on performance, using the voice and the body as primary sites of analysis. Though these focal points are important, they do not encompass the breadth of experience of trans music-makers, and tend to medicalize trans identity. This is not to say that there is a monolithic “trans experience;” I want to emphasize the importance of individual embodiment, subjectivity, and materiality, while adding to the arsenal of tools

¹ *Keyboard Fantasies: The Beverly Glenn-Copeland Story*, directed by Posy Dixon (London, England: LUCA, 2020).

²Ibid.

available with which to study and analyze music made by trans folks. One of these tools is *time*, which I use to study Beverly Glenn-Copeland's music. I advocate for a practice of trans musicology that *not only* takes into account the voice and body in the analysis of performance, but also contextualizes the sound of music within trans modes of time and history; in effect, "transing" the time of music. Most aspects of Glenn-Copeland's music can be analyzed through this framework of trans time, including rhythm, instrumentation, texture, lyric, voice, and form (or lack thereof). In a larger sense, time is the overarching logic of both life and music; we organize sounds in musical time in the same way that we organize our day-to-day lives, our years, our histories--but what does this mean when the very concept of time and history is fraught? For transgender individuals, lived time is simply not the same for whom Glenn-Copeland would call "normative" folks; trans time is full of delays and re-starts, trans history a practice of constant contextualization and reconstruction. Trans time and historical practices not only draw on the past to make sense of the present, but also draw on the present to make sense of the past. Using this framework to advance a practice of trans musicology both crystallizes and augments ideas put forth in the existing work in the field. It is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a part of the ongoing and necessarily fluctuating conversation surrounding trans subjectivity in the context of music.

There are three challenges in my life: Background

Glenn-Copeland is known to quip that there have been three major challenges in his life: 1) being Black in a white culture, 2) being trans in a heteronormative culture,³ and 3) being an artist in a business culture.⁴ From the get-go, Glenn-Copeland establishes himself as a figure

³ He uses the word heteronormative as a catch-all phrase to refer to transphobia and homophobia. ⁴ Red Bull Music Academy, "Beverly Glenn-Copeland on Finding Your Creative Voice," December 6, 2017, Youtube video, 1:25:47. <https://youtu.be/W5IdwFhBjdg>

whose subjectivity is informed by racism, transphobia/heteronormativity, and capitalism, three constructs that are irrevocably connected and mutually constructed. Growing up in a middle-class Black household in the 1950s, Glenn-Copeland was surrounded by music. In a 1979 interview, he says “I was surrounded by classical music the most, but I was also going to parties and listening to the Black Hit Parade. And I had my own record collection, which was pretty catholic--everything from the classics to Chinese music and African drumming--Odetta's first album--old Sonny Terry/Brownie McGee albums.”⁵ He feels especially connected to African drums, saying that

It's the other instrument besides the piano I feel really involved with. I figure my life has been a story of how to have an African culture-base transplanted and married to a European culture-base - and how to express that musically...In drumming, I experience the foundation of my African heritage. With the piano, I experience a synthesis of an African heritage and an exposure to a European culture base. European and African music come together for me in the way in which I'm trying to approach the piano. I get to explore the harmonies, which I love - and the rhythms, which are definitely African - and the style of singing is African-based too, blues-based, but more sort of how the African developed after it got here, to this continent.⁶

At age 17, Glenn-Copeland enrolled at McGill University's music school in Montreal to study voice and oboe. He was one of the only Black students on campus, and certainly the only openly gay student. At the time, Glenn-Copeland identified as a lesbian and lived with his girlfriend; his parents were aghast at his openly queer lifestyle, short-cropped hair, and freedom of expression. In *Keyboard Fantasies*, a documentary recently released about his music and recent surge in popularity, he talks briefly about the time his parents took him to a hospital to receive electroshock therapy. He says that this was the standard “treatment” for white queer people at the

⁵Judith Merrill, "You Can Be Anything You Want: An Interview with Beverly Glenn-Copeland," *Canadian Woman Studies* 1, no. 3 (1979), 60.

⁶*Ibid.*, 61.

time, but that he didn't "even know what happened to Black lesbians."⁷ He narrowly escaped this violent treatment by running out of the hospital, and soon after, began to write music. He put down his oboe, bought a guitar, and released his first self-titled album in 1970,⁸ which he describes as an extension of the classical repertoire that he studied in school. He had a great affinity for German lieder, even saying that he's "already been a lieder singer in another lifetime."⁹ This first album weaves together classical technique with folk guitar, like most of his work creating a product that is impossible to pinhole into a single genre category. His second album, also self titled,¹⁰ was a product of collaboration with some of the top jazz players of the time, including guitarist Lenny Breau, who he says "used to come over occasionally and we would play music together. It was a great honor to be able to do that."¹¹ One of the most consistent features of Glenn-Copeland's oeuvre is its stubborn resistance to pigeonholing--categorizations of his various albums run the gamut: folk, jazz, avant-garde minimalism, electronica, new wave, the list goes on. About his second self-titled album, Glenn-Copeland comments that "Nobody knew what to do with it, this album, they just put it up on the shelf and went 'you know...we don't know what it is,' so they didn't even have a category" to put it in.¹² This suggests that an element of Glenn-Copeland's delayed fame was the inability to sell his work in a way that relies so heavily on discrete categories; his genre-defying creativity--or rather the capitalist narrowness of the industry--shoved his music to the back of a shelf to be forgotten for decades. Certainly elements of his music could hold any number of genre labels, but none are able to encapsulate the logic of trans time that pervades and undergirds Glenn-Copeland's sound.

⁷*Keyboard Fantasies*, dir. Posy Dixon, 2020.

⁸*Beverly Glenn-Copeland*, re-released by MajikBus Entertainment UK Ltd., 2018.

⁹*Keyboard Fantasies*, dir. Posy Dixon, 2020.

¹⁰*Beverly Glenn-Copeland*, Transgressive Records Ltd., 1970.

¹¹ Judith Merrill, "You Can Be Anything You Want," 61.

¹² Red Bull Music Academy, "Beverly Glenn-Copeland" December 6, 2017.

Glenn-Copeland is also a practicing Buddhist, branching away from his mother's Quaker tradition, and in 1979 described his practice as "chanting about an hour and a half a day, and

reciting several sections of a couple of chapters of the Lotus Sutra...it makes your life very rhythmical, in rhythm with the universe in a kind of way.”¹³ This philosophy informs his composition process, which he says comes mainly from the “Universal Broadcasting System.” He thinks of himself as a radio, “tuned to the audio frequency.”¹⁴ In 1985, isolated with his then partner in the stark wilderness of Ontario, Glenn-Copeland wrote and self-released on cassette the album that would eventually change his life: *Keyboard Fantasies*. He says that “the trees were talking, and I was listening.” Glenn-Copeland had always been fascinated by computers, viewing them as silicon life forms in contrast with carbon-based organic life, and got his hands on a portable personal computer as soon as he was able--even though he couldn’t do much more than carry it around and marvel at the possibilities it held inside. When personal computer technology advanced further, he bought an Atari computer system, a Yamaha DX7 synthesizer (the first digital synth on the market), and a Roland TR-707 drum machine, and used these electronic instruments to write *Keyboard Fantasies*.

Glenn-Copeland sold no more than 100 of the original *Keyboard Fantasies* cassettes, and then, he quips, it “went dormant for 100 years.”¹⁵ The most notoriety he gained for his music during the time it was originally released was the odd collector’s status of first printings of the record *Beverly Glenn-Copeland*, which sold at auction for upwards of a few thousand dollars (though he never saw any of this money himself). In the intervening years, he shifted his focus to children’s television, working as a musical personality, “Beverly,” on the CBC kid’s show *Mr. Dressup* for 25 years. He describes this job as very high-profile but very constricting, because

¹³ Judith Merril, “You Can Be Anything You Want,” 61.

¹⁴ *Keyboard Fantasies*, dir. Posy Dixon, 2020.

¹⁵ Red Bull Music Academy, “Beverly Glenn-Copeland” December 6, 2017.

you couldn’t be trans and write for children at the time.¹⁶ He says “I knew I wasn’t heteronormative,¹⁷ but I had to act as a female and fudge it in that direction...I was referred to as ‘her’ all the time, and somewhere inside, that made me very uncomfortable. Discussing being non-

heteronormative in the environment of a children's show was just not a reality at that time. It didn't take away from that fact that I was enjoying it, but there were deeper psychological stresses going on at the same time."¹⁸ The realization that he was trans, however, did not come at that time. Though at the age of three Glenn-Copeland told his mother that he was a boy, nothing came of it until 1995, when he read a book by a transgender activist that finally gave him the words to describe his identity.¹⁹ In 2002, Glenn-Copeland came out as a trans man, and with this transition marked the beginning of what has been effectively a second life.

In 2016, the fate of his musical career changed with a single email; the owner of a Japanese record store, Ryota Masuko, asked Glenn-Copeland if he had any remaining copies of *Keyboard Fantasies*, and within a few days had sold the 30 copies Glenn-Copeland sent him. Within a month, Glenn-Copeland had offers from ten record labels to re-release *Keyboard Fantasies*, along with his other albums. *Keyboard Fantasies* and his second self-titled album were re-released in 2018, and in 2019 he began a world tour with a band of young musicians called Indigo Rising. The band's pianist, swathed in a leopard print coat and with a mane of wild black hair, remarks that it sometimes feels strange "going for broke on the road with a 74-year-old. It's his retirement, to be with his amazing wife and family," but instead he's touring with a group of 20-somethings.²⁰ Of course, the idea of retirement plays into normative (white,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ He also uses "heteronormative" in place of cisgender in many instances.

¹⁸ Jesse Locke, "The Incredible Life of Beverly Glenn-Copeland: Canadian Music's Unsung Hero," Exclaim! September 23, 2020, https://exclaim.ca/music/article/beverly_glenn_Glenn-Copeland_interview_timeline ¹⁹ Grayson Haver-Currin, "Listeners Found Beverly Glenn-Copeland. It was time." New York Times, September 14, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/14/arts/music/beverly-glenn-Glenn-Copeland-transmissions.html> ²⁰ *Keyboard Fantasies*, dir. Posy Dixon, 2020.

bourgeois, heterosexual, cisgender) temporal logics: you have a career, you get married, you retire, you spend the rest of your happy days with your wife and children. But Glenn-Copeland's second

youth began in 2002 with his coming out, so it seems appropriate that he would spend his young adult years as a touring artist, eating take-out and dancing on the sidewalk with a cohort of vibrant, young musicians.

Glenn-Copeland's life has been a series of false starts, turns to the past and to the future, near anonymity and triumphant return. One could say that his experience is trans time exemplified, brought into the realm of history and aurality. He remarks that "Nothing I wrote sounded like anything anybody wanted to hear at that time," but "now, all of a sudden, it seems like it's 'time,' or something."²¹

Literature Review

If you didn't have a category, you just existed out in space somewhere: Approaching a trans musicology

There is a mutual weakness in both queer musicology and queer/trans studies; in the case of queer musicology, there is a small amount of specifically *trans* music scholarship, beyond the discussion of the trans body and voice in performance. In the case of queer/trans studies, there is a small amount of meaningful music criticism and analysis. Some queer/trans scholarship talks about music, but it does so in the context of queer theory, as opposed to using musicological methods that dive deeper into the form and sound of the music itself.²² A "feminist" sub-area of musicological scholarship has been deemed "new musicology," "new gay and lesbian

²¹Ibid.

²² See Chapter 7 of Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* ("What's That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives"), Halberstam's article "Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy," most works by Tim Lawrence involving disco, Alexa Woloshyn's article "Electroacoustic Voices: Sounds Queer, and Why it Matters"

musicology," and "queer musicology,"²³ yet this work pays little, if any, attention to trans and/or

gender nonconforming music and musicians, instead privileging discussions of gay and lesbian sexuality and centering cis-womanhood in a narrow interpretation of what it means to construct a “queer” or “feminist” practice of music criticism that also tends to pay little attention to intersections of identity.²⁴

In her 2009 article, Rachel Lewis asks “What’s Queer about Musicology Now?” Lewis details the relatively short history of queer musicology in order to determine what kind of future it holds as a discipline.²⁵ She notes the drive toward a music criticism centered on performance and embodiment,²⁶ and the lack of attention queer scholarship has toward music and sound in general, citing Judith Peraino’s article “Listening to Gender.”²⁷ She points out that queer music scholarship focuses heavily on the voice as a point of analysis, especially in the context of transsexual musicians, but also acknowledges the dearth of scholarship relating to transsexual and transgender issues (as she calls it).²⁸ Lewis also says that “Queer Vibrations” failed to adequately address matters of intersectional analysis, and that queer musicology in general does not pay enough attention to race and class.²⁹ She stresses the importance of locating further queer music scholarship in an “increasingly globalized and interconnected world,” and of addressing

²³ Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), PAGE NUMBER

²⁴ An example of this erasure can be found in the volume *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (which does not even include the word “transgender” in its index). In an article by Martha Mockus entitled “Queer Thoughts on Country Music and k.d. lang., Mockus analyzes the lyrics of lang’s cover of “Big Big Love,” which imply that the singer has a massive erection; in response to this, Mockus asks “(Is she saying what I think she’s saying? How can a girl have a hard-on, and why is she telling me about it?)” Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), PAGE NUMBER

²⁵ Rachel Lewis, “Theorizing Gender, Culture, and Music: “Queer Vibrations-What’s Queer about Musicology Now?” *Women & Music - A Journal of Gender and Culture* 13, (2009).

Lewis’s title takes off from from Halberstam, Muñoz, and Eng’s “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” [add citation]

²⁶ Lewis, “What’s Queer about Musicology Now?” 48.

²⁷ Judith Ann Peraino, “Listening to Gender: A Response to Judith Halberstam,” *Women & Music - A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11, no. 1 (2007).

²⁸ Lewis, “What’s Queer about Musicology Now?” 50.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

the deep colonial roots of historical musicology and the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality that these legacies perpetuate.³⁰ Lewis points out, if not rectifies, areas of lack and absence in queer musicological practice.

Rather than approach the small field of trans musicology from a point of negativity, I view it as an opportunity for expansion; I want to acknowledge the work that *has* been done to center transness in musical conversations, and build from there. A recent article by Dana Baitz, “Toward a Trans* Method in Musicology,” champions the need for a specifically trans musicology.³¹ She argues that a *trans* musicology is invested in the body, in contrast to the emphasis on transcending the body in *queer* musicology.³² While many musicians can be studied through the lens of queer musicology, she says, others require a trans perspective to properly interrogate their work; for Baitz, part of this comes from the possibility that trans musicians may be actively attempting to perform what would be considered traditional gender roles and presentations.³³ Baitz’s work sets an important precedent for a practice of trans musicology, in that she emphasizes the importance of the individual narrative as a source of knowledge.³⁴ However, there is a distinction between the elevation of individual narrative/lived experience,³⁵ and the isolating individualism of identity that is often (and certainly in Baitz’s case) bound up in a white subjectivity that does not acknowledge the always already racialized construction of gender. Baitz does nothing to acknowledge the intersections of gender and race, occupying what Snorton would call the role of the “good transsexual,” or the white trans woman who is able to

³⁰ Ibid., 53.

³¹ Dana Baitz, “Toward a Trans* Method in Musicology,” *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*, edited by Fred Everett Maus and Sheila Whiteley, 2018.

³² Ibid., 1.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Baitz., 12.

³⁵ The importance of lived experience being a foundational tenet of Black feminist thought, put forward by Patricia Hill Collins.

“articulate transsexuality as an acceptable subject position through an embodiment of the norms of white womanhood, most notably domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality.”³⁶ Trans musicology as a discipline is still in its nascent stages, but work that has already been done in this field provides a solid foundation from which to build upon. By nature, queer and trans studies is a field that constantly evolves, and this evolution has been echoed in music studies, albeit at a much slower rate. In the next section, I detail the ways in which trans musicology has almost unerringly centered materiality of the body, and offer ways in which the field can move beyond this narrow focus.

Up to and including this moment, most trans musicology uses the voice and the body as primary points of analysis. This is unsurprising, as the singing voice and the body are both productive sites of gender and sex performance, and are both employed in the performance of music in a very outward sense. These points of analysis are no doubt integral to many trans narratives, but the hyper-fixation on materiality of the body can easily erase other trans modes of being, as well as more nuanced analysis of sound and substance of the music. For example, Baitz’s frequent use of the word “transsexual” and her unerring emphasis on the medical transition of the body as a site of analysis skews somewhat to the side of the transmedicalist, erasing trans folks whose identities are not so bound up in the materiality of the body. Randy Drake says that “the materiality of the body and the subjectivity of the self cannot be neatly separated, and they work together to inform multidimensional interpretations of identity. The current focus on medical transition leaves behind those trans individuals who do not desire surgery and wish to live ambiguously.”³⁷ Drake’s critique of this trajectory in trans musicology

³⁶ Skidmore in Snorton: C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 141.

³⁷ Randy M. Drake, “Musical Performance and Trans Identity: Narratives of Selfhood, Embodied Identities, and Musicking,” PhD diss., (UC Santa Barbara, 2018), 66.

stands alone, and is made more significant by the volume of work that sets the precedent for this myopic focus in the field.

An early instance of the analysis of voice in the context of queer musicology is Suzanne Cusick's article, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," which takes Judith Butler's seminal work on gender performativity and expands it into the realm of sex. Cusick claims that the voice, like any repeated and stylized performance that would produce an un/intelligible gender, produces an un/intelligible sex.³⁸ Though Butler does also categorize sex as performative and constructed, Cusick brings this idea into the realm of music performance by questioning the societally implicit narrative that because the voice is a physical trait, it is inevitably indicative of a sexed body, saying that "Voices, then, stand for all the imperatives we might already imagine to be implicit in a sexed body, before culture has its way with it."³⁹ One noticeable gap in Cusick's analysis of the performance of the sexed voice is her complete exclusion of the transgender person and body. In such a careful analysis of the cultural role of the voice in song, and with her protracted use of Butler's ideas, I am somewhat surprised that she failed to consider the implications of the transgender voice changed either by hormones or by vocal training. Cusick explicates with great detail the implications of the child's voice going through puberty, but perhaps a more productive analysis of hormonal and social vocal change lies in the second youth of trans folks and our concerted effort to reimagine the voice, whether with the goal of becoming more or less intelligible in our gender and/or sex. I am interested in going into a more complete analysis of the role of the singing voice in the re/construction of gender for Beverly Glenn-Copeland himself that privileges his own trans narrative as unique, yet is signficatory of a larger experience for many trans musicians.

³⁸ Suzanne Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," In *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*, edited by Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley, (Zürich; Los Angeles: Carciofoli, 1999), 25. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

Alexis Woloshyn explores the subversive potential of electronic manipulation of the voice, as well as acoustic instruments, in her article “Electroacoustic Voices: Sounds Queer, and Why it Matters,” in which she elucidates the way that voices and acoustic instruments enhanced by technology in order to produce new sounds (as opposed to merely amplified sounds) engages a queer practice of self-fashioning and disruption.⁴⁰ Woloshyn cites Cusick and emphasizes the expectation of gender and sex derived from hearing a voice, but is more interested in the recorded voice than what she calls the material (“natural”) voice; in this context, the voice is isolated by audio recording from its bodily source and manipulated through technology in order to alter its material sound. What makes music-listening queer for Woloshyn is not gender and/or sexuality, but the destabilization of the boundaries between the self and the other, and the subject and the object produced by listening to electroacoustic music.⁴¹ I aim to expand on Woloshyn’s exploration of electroacoustic music by assessing its explicitly trans potential, especially as it appears in archival recordings, remixes, and re-releases that immortalize the process of physical transition, preserving a dysphoria-inducing voice while also providing the potential to re-voice these electroacoustic archives in front of a live audience.

Going for broke on the road with a 74-year-old: Musical Time/Historical Time/Experienced Time

In the context of trans musicology, there is a great deal of productive potential in the connections between “trans time” and the time of music (formal, rhythmic, harmonic). To bridge the gap between queer scholarship and musicology and get a sense of what might constitute *trans musical time*, it is necessary to incorporate ideas of queer temporality with ideas of musical time.

⁴⁰Alexa Woloshyn, “Electroacoustic Voices: Sounds Queer, and Why it Matters,” *Tempo (London)* 71, no. 280 (2017), 69.

⁴¹Ibid., 76.

Foremost among scholarship on queer temporalities is J. Jack Halberstam's influential volume, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*.⁴² Halberstam introduces the topic of queer temporality, categorizing as such experiences that occur outside the restrictive realm of heteronormative family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. Halberstam conceptualizes queerness as an *outcome* of "strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices."⁴³ This is in opposition to what they criticize in mainstream discourse as a fixation on sexual identity itself, rather than a queer mode of being, predicated on functioning outside of normative practices. This implicitly critiques current neoliberal gay/lesbian politics, which situate queer identity as something to be commodified and written into law. Halberstam emphasizes the present moment, citing the emphasis on savoring the here and now under the constant threat of death that characterized the late 20th century during the AIDS epidemic, yet simultaneously looks to the future with an "epistemology of youth" that encourages looking forward to the possibilities of living life outside the restrictive teleological cage of youth, aging, and maturity.⁴⁴ Especially for trans folks, multiple births and youths are made possible through the process of coming out, transition, and embodiment. Halberstam categorizes limiting and normative life landmarks as representative of a white, bourgeois expectation of stability and continuity. This mode of un/productive repetition is crucial to a conception of the radical potentialities held within queer time as an inherently and characteristically *anti-capitalist* practice. Halberstam acknowledges this idea, referring to normative time as a necessary by-product of capitalist productivity.

⁴² J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place : Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. Sexual Cultures, (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

This framework of queer temporality that Halberstam lays out in the introduction of *A Queer Time and Place* is explored through the rest of the book mainly through visual and print media. Other primary sources used include photography and visual art of and by transgender people, several other popular movies as well as art films, novels and written works, and a chapter dedicated to lesbian punk music. Noticeably absent in this chapter relating to music, however, is a meaningful analysis of sound itself; Halberstam focuses almost unerringly on the aesthetic significations of the performer and only briefly touches on the music itself, with quick and cursory referents to pitch of the voice, instrumentation, and tempo. Judith Peraino points out this area of lack in her own article “Listening to Gender: A Response to [Jack] Halberstam,” saying that “voice and music--have haunted the margins of theory but have seldom factored as centrally as the visual,” framing the aural aspect of gender as analogous to a secondary sex characteristic.⁴⁵

Peraino also refers to Elizabeth Freeman’s concept of “temporal drag;” Freeman describes temporal drag as the “counter-genealogical practice of archiving culture’s throwaway objects, including the outmoded masculinities and femininities from which usable pasts can be extracted.”⁴⁶ She criticizes Butler’s lack of historical grounding, countering Butler’s argument that there is no “original” sexuality or gender, only copies of copies.⁴⁷ Temporal drag is a framework reliant on dragging from history the referents for the constructed genders we inhabit in the present moment, its counter-genealogical nature an implicit criticism of heteronormative conceptions of time, especially that of reproduction.

⁴⁵ Judith Ann Peraino, "Listening to Gender: A Response to Judith Halberstam," 59.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds : Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Perverse Modernities, (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010), xxiii.

⁴⁷ Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*, (Routledge Classics, Taylor and Francis, 2011), 43.

In the vein of historical grounding, and concerning intersections of race and gender, C. Riley Snorton says that “inhabiting blackness produces not a gender in a dominant symbolic sense but a figuration of gender that is inextricably linked to a metaphysics of time.”⁴⁸ This again offers an explicit critique of the neoliberal tendency to espouse trans and queer as identitarian adjectives, as opposed to a praxis and a politic. Snorton brings to the forefront the always already racialized implications of gender as it is constructed in American society. Snorton’s narratives of gender motivated by fugitivity, bodily fungibility, and escape illustrate the stark divide between the history of Black gender-nonconforming folks in America and white, bourgeois, increasingly neoliberal narratives of self-fulfilling individual identity. Snorton’s insistence on history as a grounding factor in queer time counters Halberstam’s ahistorical approach, emphasizing the central and active role of the past in constructing Black transness, as opposed to focusing solely on the present and future. I will draw upon these ideas in order to situate Beverly Glenn-Copeland’s narrative as one not isolated and individualized, but rather self-consciously informed by history, kin, and the generational trauma experienced by a descendent of enslaved persons.

A more future-oriented exploration of queer time can be found in Jose Esteban Muñoz’s 2009 book *Cruising Utopia*, in which he presents an argument for looking past the “here and now” into the “there and then,” giving an optimistic and sprawling account of queer futurity and a polemic of the modern tendency for queer politics to follow a neoliberal and identitarian logic. He advocates for a collective thrust toward the utopian, as opposed to the individualistic tendency to fixate on unproductive, normalizing/assimilating reforms like gay marriage, which he roundly criticizes for their participation in the “straight present;” the straight present “tells us

⁴⁸ C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, 107.

that there is no future but the here and now of everyday life.”⁴⁹ He puts forward the idea that queerness has not yet arrived, and that queer utopia (in a concrete, as opposed to an abstract, sense) exists in this potentiality for the as-yet unrealized.

Drake foregrounds the “historicity of the body,”⁵⁰ which embraces the phenomenological concept of perception that not only acknowledges the perceived present, but also the past and future that inevitably go along with it. Drake acknowledges the “open future” of gender identity and sees gender as a process, rather than a straight line.⁵¹ He enacts “narratives that disrupt the teleology of medicalized transsexuality as corporeal freedom,” in the words of Snorton.⁵² Drake asks what the desire of the artist is and how that desire influences the music and identity they create, centering the experience and subjectivity of the individual over generalizing broad strokes.

An important aspect of my analysis of Beverly Glenn-Copeland’s life and music is the theorizing of musical time itself, and the way that certain features of music can be interpreted as trans in their timing, structure, and content. Jonathan D. Kramer introduces the concept of “vertical time,” and expands on the existing concept of “non-teleological listening,” in his book *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*.⁵³ For Kramer, “vertical music” is a phenomenon that came into being with the advent of new and contemporary musical practices (in the context of Western classical music, that is) that have abandoned the musical phrase as a marker of time and progress in favor of an “infinite now” that can be heard in repetition and stasis, and a lack of goal-orientation as listeners of Western classical music have

⁴⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia : The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 22.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 201.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, 145.

⁵³ Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music : New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*, (New York: London: Schirmer Books; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988), 376, 375.

become accustomed to hearing (in relation to harmonic progressions with definite impetus, phrase shapes that lead somewhere or the existence of phrases at all, indications of rupture or climax through dynamic contrast or energy, etc.)⁵⁴ Many works by modern minimalist composers of the time, such as Terry Riley, John Adams, John Cage, La Monte Young, Laurie Anderson, and Phillip Glass, would often fall under the umbrella of “vertical music.” Kramer then emphasizes the importance, in vertical music, of sticking to the parameters set out early in the piece, so as to avoid any significant “temporal articulations of considerable structural import,” which would ruin the verticality of the music.⁵⁵ He also emphasizes the idea of “nonteleological music,” which simply refers to music that does not progress in a directly linear, horizontal fashion to a finish line, which I frame as directly analogous to queer temporalities and the rejection of normative structures of living.

Kramer emphasizes the loss of clock time when listening to a piece of music that employs vertical time, saying that “it became not so much difficult as irrelevant to distinguish past, present, and future.”⁵⁶ Kramer’s idea that music can elide past, present, and future is not a new one--this framing is found in indigenous practices of music, as well as dance, as Heidi Aklaseuk Senungetuk comments; she says that her traditional practice of Inupiaq dance “stems from ancient stories and practices of the past...grounds us in the present and helps us think about the future...We don’t see ourselves as old-fashioned; rather, we exist in the present while invoking past and future generations.”⁵⁷ Senungetuk’s framing of musical practice as always drawing from the past to enrich the present shows that trans time is not a matter of identitarian politics, but rather part of a rejection of colonial, capitalist frameworks of time.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 379.

⁵⁷ Heidi Aklaseuk Senungetuk, “Prologue” from *Music and modernity among first peoples of North America* by Victoria Lindsay Levine and Dylan Robinson, (Wesleyan University Press, 2019), xiv.

One example of this that I have found is especially parallel to my own trajectory is Larissa Wodtke's article, "The Irony and the Ecstasy: Queer Aging of Pet Shop Boys and LCD Soundsystem in Electronic Dance Music," which employs both concepts of queer temporality and queer listening in order to paint a picture of these two bands that encapsulates their disruptive potential.⁵⁸ Wodtke focuses her attention on the bands' non-normative aging, citing Halberstam's "epistemology of youth" to do so, as well as Freeman's characterization of queer time.⁵⁹ Wodtke also talks about repetitive music as normatively unproductive, using Kramer's definition of vertical music to do so.

Recall Halberstam's characterization of queer temporalities as the circumvention of normative, teleological modes of being that are direct byproducts of a capitalist society, and the connection between Kramer's capitalistically unproductive modes of music-making/listening and the non-normative temporal logics of trans existence become clear.

Methodology

Tracks selected from Beverly Glenn-Copeland's career retrospective album, *Transmissions*, will serve as my primary source. *Transmissions* is a source that is largely representative of his body of musical work, as well as an interesting case study in itself because of its labeling as a "retrospective," which is a model of memory that plays into normative modes of time.⁶⁰ By looking deeply at the substance of Glenn-Copeland's music, we can understand the ways in which it creates a sound of queer time, as well as how his lived and embodied subjectivities inform its sound. To contribute to the slowly growing body of trans musicology, I

⁵⁸ Larissa Wodtke, "The Irony and the Ecstasy: The Queer Aging of Pet Shop Boys and LCD Soundsystem," *Dancecult* 11, no. 1 (2019): Dancecult, 2019-11-01, Vol.11 (1), 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶⁰ Taking after "straight time" in Jose Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: Muñoz, Cruising Utopia*, 2009.

will use several main theories in order to analyze Glenn-Copeland's music: Jack Halberstam's

theory of queer temporality, Jonathan Kramer's concept of vertical music, and C. Riley Snorton's elaboration on temporal drag (originally coined by Elizabeth Freeman).

I also want to address my choice of the label "musicological" for my work with trans music studies and with Glenn-Copeland's music. My work is musicological only in that it attempts to derive meaning from music. Clearly, trans musicology and its alternative historical methods that I propose stray far from the problematic tradition of historical musicology, but I also hesitate to label my work as ethnomusicological because I do not employ ethnographic research methods, rather a combination of theory and Glenn-Copeland's own lived experience gleaned from articles, interviews, and a documentary. Drake's ethnomusicological exploration of the interaction between the identities, biographies, and music of Jennifer Leitham⁶¹ and Joe Stevens⁶² provide the closest analogy to the project I am approaching with Glenn-Copeland, though his methodology differs from mine in that he has built personal relationships, conducted first-hand interviews, and even performed with both Leitham and Stevens, situating him clearly in the realm of ethnomusicological field work.

It is important to note that ethnomusicologists have done a great deal of work regarding non-Western constructions of gender.⁶³ The scope of this thesis does not attempt to address non-Western conceptions of gender because of the positionality of its main case study. It is not claiming to provide a one-size-fits-all practice of trans musicology, rather building off of the existing (albeit small) base, and leaving room for future growth in a practice that is by necessity sensitive and mutable.

⁶¹ Jennifer Leitham is a trans jazz musician...[more]

⁶² Joe Stevens is a trans singer/songwriter...[more]

⁶³ See Jeff Roy's "From Jalsah to Jalsā: Music, Identity, and (Gender) Transitioning at a Hījra Rite of Initiation" for an in-depth investigation of the connections between music-making, identity, and belonging in the South Asian hijra community;

TRANSMISSIONS/TRANS-MISSIONS: ANALYSIS

*Transmissions: The Music of Beverly Glenn-Copeland*⁶⁴ is marketed as a career retrospective album, meaning that it is intended to provide a sampling of Glenn-Copeland's work that is representative of his career, from start to finish. I would argue that this label is somewhat of a misnomer, because truly, his career is only just beginning. The idea of a "career retrospective" plays into logics of straight time that prescribe beginnings and ends, rather than the "bursts and lags in and on time"⁶⁵ that characterize Glenn-Copeland's life and work. However, it is important to note that the tracks as they are presented on the album are not arranged in chronological order, but rather in an order that defies any kind of categorizing logic. Songs produced in the 70s and 80s are interspersed by newer ones, as well as remastered versions of old tracks that breathe new life into a decades-old sound. In keeping with this logic, the tracks I analyze below are in no particular order, but are chosen because of the particular way each of them "transes" time.

Ever New (1986)⁶⁶

"Ever New" is like a sonic hug. The track opens with a simple string of reverberating tones, produced with a synth patch reminiscent of some acoustic instrument that is difficult to pin down—after several bars of this in an ambiguous time signature, another synth line layers over the top, this time recalling a marimba, or a vibraphone, with clear, ringing tones. With the addition of this second line, the time signature becomes more clear-cut, and four bars of 4/4 later,

⁶⁴ *Transmissions: The Music of Beverly Glenn-Copeland*, Transgressive HQ, 2020.

⁶⁵ C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, 174.

⁶⁶ Beverly Glenn-Copeland, "Ever New," Recorded 1986, Track 1 on *Keyboard Fantasies*, (Transgressive Records Ltd.).

the theme, or “mantra,” of the song begins, a simple and repetitive melodic line that outlines a G major triad. This line has the quality of a plucked string, and though the meter never falters, the fluid triplets and syncopated lines in the background lend it a lilting, loose feel that carries the listener throughout their seven-minute meditation. One more synth line layers on top of this mantra, a rising line in a higher register that seems to hover above the rest, accompanied by a series of bar-long bass notes. Glenn-Copeland remarks in an interview that he loves electronic sounds because they can “sound like a violin if you squint with your ears;” in the same way that the detachment of the voice from the body produces queer potentialities,⁶⁷ the electronic detachment of sound from the instrument itself has the same effect, leaving us scrambling to make an unintelligible sound intelligible.

The effect of the whole is unhurried, engrossing, and beautiful in its simplicity. After the second full repetition of the mantra, the listener is led to expect a full cadence and a definitive end, but the mantra repeats a third time, creating a sense of timelessness, of “this could go on forever, and I’m okay with that.” Kramer’s idea of “vertical music” applies here; the elongated, sometimes nonexistent phrase structure results in “a single present stretched out into an enormous duration, a potentially infinite ‘now’ that nonetheless feels like an instant.”⁶⁸ Though Kramer refers to works of avant-garde minimalism that are usually much longer in form and duration, “Ever New” creates this listening experience in a shorter period of time. When a full cadential sequence finally arrives after the third repetition of the mantra--over a minute into the song--it is with a sense of belatedness and peace. Listening vertically is also, in this case, listening queerly; the cadence, as a structuring element of Western music, represents a teleological conclusion or goal to be achieved. By delaying this conclusion and denying this

⁶⁷ Jarman-Ivens in Woloshyn, “Electroacoustic Voices,” 68.

⁶⁸ Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 55.

goal, through the aesthetic of vertical time, time itself is “transed.” The purpose of the music is not driving forward, but sitting back and enjoying the ride; Glenn-Copeland does not ask “are we there yet?” but instead says, “We are here now. We may get there eventually, but wow, don’t those wildflowers look nice? Let’s take a detour. Isn’t it good to exist in this car, in our bodies, with each other?” Drake says that “Even though [the trans] narrative is often perceived as one between two fixed points, the productive work of trans narratives offer expressions of gender diversity and affective work that point away from a final destination.”⁶⁹ If we arrive at a certain destination, it is a moment of serendipity, not of teleology. We are content in the moment, but now it is time for a change--and that change comes in the form of Glenn-Copeland’s steady voice, gesturing us inward.

The lyric of the song is brief, and repeated three times throughout the seven-minute track; the mantra continues unceasingly, and each iteration of the lyric is spaced out with another repetition of the mantra.

Welcome the spring, the summer rain
Softly turned to sing again
Welcome the bud, the summer blooming flower

Welcome the child whose hand I hold
Welcome to you both young and old
We are ever new, we are ever new

Glenn-Copeland paints a picture of cyclicity, of the turning of the seasons and the renewal of nature, and by extension of the body. He communicates a sense of utter openness, turning from a first person subjectivity (“I”) to a second person (“you”) and concluding with the collective “we.” Rather than think of the line “welcome to you, both young and old” as a gesture of welcome to those who are young *and* those who are old, there is a certain trans potentiality in

⁶⁹ Drake, *Musical Performance and Trans Identity*, 72.

thinking of this as a referent to those who, like Glenn-Copeland, are *simultaneously* young and old, shedding the boundaries of chronological aging and clock time. The phrase “We are ever new” itself indicates a refusal of normative modes of aging, as well as a gesture to Muñoz’s queer horizon and his conception of queerness that is not just *being*, but actively *doing* “for and toward the future.”⁷⁰ As opposed to Wodtke’s exploration of queer aging in the music of the Pet Shop Boys and LCD Soundsystem, in which she posits an eternal present in place of any sense of futurity,⁷¹ Glenn-Copeland’s song straddles the present and the future.

“Ever New” holds a critical tension between stasis and change; while the sound is repetitive and hypnotic, the lyrics push us toward the future. How can we reconcile this gap between stasis and change? It is in this space that “Ever New” is trans; it does not scorn the present in the mode of Muñoz’s queer utopia, rather indicates an eternal present that relies on both the past and the future in order to imbue it with meaning. “Ever New” is not a line, but a circle, in which behind is also ahead, and there is no destination, rather a series of stops along the way on an endless road trip. In “Ever New” these stops take the form of the occasional cadence, phrase ending, or the entrance of Glenn-Copeland’s voice. These temporal articulations, which Kramer says would “destroy” the verticality of a piece of music,⁷² in this case function as moments that call us out of our reverie and into intentionality, yet each one leads back into the mantra once again. Though the *track* obviously has a finite start and end, the beginning and end of the *song* itself are ambiguous; the song “develops” through the gradual addition of layers, and these layers drop away until it fades out. It is easy to imagine that the mantra continues in the ambiguous space left by the fade-out, which categorically is not an *ending*, but rather a relegation of sound to a space past our current consciousness. It is not difficult to imagine the

⁷⁰ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

⁷¹ Wodtke, “The Irony and the Ecstasy,” 42.

⁷² Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 55.

mantra and the lyric repeating in this liminal space, or looping back around again to connect with the start of the track. In this instance, fading out also calls our attention to the reluctance with which the track must come to a close, and the unnaturalness of its closure.

The prevalence of repetition in the music of the 1980s and Glenn-Copeland's album *Keyboard Fantasies* in particular (the album on which "Ever New" was originally released in 1986) holds a particularly subversive potential in the context of capitalist society. The act of repetition without capitalist productivity is poignant in the context of trans music criticism, as trans people--especially BIPOC⁷³ trans people--are often pushed to the margins of society and are unable to perform capitalist productivity, whether in the form of an 'intelligible' gender, a lucrative job, a traditional marriage, or traditional reproduction. Trans women in particular are compelled to enter into survival sex work and the gig economy to get by. Cyclical music that emphasizes unproductivity is a direct reproach to capitalist means of production. This highlights a certain trans subjectivity in the practice of repetitious music-making, amplifying the already "unproductive" nature of music-making to the nth degree.

"Ever New" exemplifies trans temporalities and embraces alternative logics of aging and reproduction with its repetitive, mantra-like synth lines and expansive, open lyrics. Its open-ended and harmonically simple form allows the listener to experience a prolonged present that envelops both the present, past, and future into one sonic experience, while at the same time upsetting capitalistic norms of productivity.

Deep River (2018)⁷⁴

⁷³ Black, Indigenous, People of Color

⁷⁴ Beverly Glenn-Copeland, "Deep River," Recorded 2020, Track 4 on *Transmissions*. (Transgressive Records Ltd., 2020).

To recall the words of Jose Esteban Muñoz, “It is important to call on the past, to animate it, understanding that the past has a performative nature, which is to say that rather than being static and fixed, *the past does things*.”⁷⁵ The idea that the past is separate and untouchable is a characteristic of “straight time;” the trans/queer past is dynamic and active, and mutually shapes and is shaped by the present. Nowhere in Glenn-Copeland’s discography is this interaction so clear as in his live performance of the spiritual “Deep River,” in which he merges the song as it is traditionally sung with West African drumming. He speaks about the significance of this decision: during times of slavery, many communities of enslaved West Africans were not permitted to use traditional drums in moments of coming together in song because slave owners feared the drum beats could be used as a form of encoded communication, so spirituals were primarily sung without drums.⁷⁶ Glenn-Copeland often talks about his genealogy as a descendent of enslaved West African persons. He says that in drumming he “experience[s] the foundation of [his] African heritage,” and that though he views his musical practice as a merging of European and African traditions, this form of Black musical expression most accurately reflects his “center.”⁷⁷

Glenn-Copeland’s performance of “Deep River” enacts temporal drag by reinventing the context of its constituent sounds in a way that counters histories of oppression. In a way, this version of “Deep River” could be read as a cover in the same way Halberstam interprets cover songs in “Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy;” they say that the cover song as an “act of creative reinvention constitutes history as a mode of revisiting the past through a deliberately distorted lens,” reaching “back into a historical grab bag of influences.”⁷⁸ Though the

⁷⁵ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 27-28. (emphasis added)

⁷⁶ “Deep River” itself was popularized by Henry Burleigh in 1916, but despite this anachronism, the intent and import of Copeland’s version remain, in my view, the same.

⁷⁷ Judith Merrill, “You Can Be Anything You Want,” 61.

⁷⁸ J. Jack Halberstam, “Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy,” *Women & Music - A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11, no. 1 (2007), 54, 57.

instrumentation of this song is quite commonplace, Glenn-Copeland’s intentionality with its historical grounding makes it clear that these sounds are, if not aurally, then historically disjointed.

The track begins with an a capella iteration of the melody, with Glenn-Copeland's voice alone: the dips sit deep in his voice, the swells soar high with his characteristic, classically-trained vibrato. The climactic note of the melody seems to push the boundaries of his voice, pressing the sustained high note on the word "promised" forward almost to the point of breaking. After a poignant pause, he starts in again, this time drumming on a djembe. The strong rhythm of his hand drumming, punctuated by bass drum kicks, builds to a fervor, and his voice joins again, along with drumset, keyboard and punchy bass. After two repetitions of the melody, he breaks into a chorus of wordless syllables, "wa la la la lay," and asks the audience to sing along with him; a small number of them join in on the first round, but by the fourth time around, and with his encouragement, the crowd is an audible force in the recording. The overall effect is joyous and communal; his band drives the song forward, but he ends it alone with several conclusive hits on the djembe. The crowd erupts into ecstatic applause.

Glenn-Copeland's performance of this song is a quintessential example of his embodiment of the active past as a Black trans man, and highlights the idea that when he is performing, he is not selectively performing his gender or race, but rather the sum total of all intersecting identities he holds. With his performance of "Deep River" in particular, he subversively rewrites the past by adding West African drumming to the song, reclaiming a mode of expression that was stolen from his enslaved predecessors. Glenn-Copeland's insistence on audience participation in the context of this performance is absolutely crucial to the mutually constructive roles of the past and present, and raises larger ideas about the power of music to do

just that. By nature, music constantly reinscribes the past into the present through the rehearsal and performance of songs/pieces/tunes written in a past era. Whether it is a 300-year-old Baroque suite,

a cover of a Ramones song, or a reimagining of a spiritual, sound is actively brought from the past into our present moment, *and* makes possible the future performance of this sound by reinscribing it into our collective memory. Music is more alive than words on a page or brushstrokes on canvas because of the necessary component of human interaction in its re/creation, and this is one of the reasons that its absence in studies of queer theory and queer time is so striking. “Deep River” showcases this aliveness in itself, but the added component of audience interaction makes ever more clear the communal aspect of both music making, as well as the re/construction of history, and cements the idea that the past is active and fluid.

Glenn-Copeland’s trans embodiment is also a critical aspect of this performance. As Snorton writes, “trans--in each of its permutations--finds expression and continuous circulation within blackness, and blackness is transected by embodied procedures that fall under the sign of gender.”⁷⁹ I would like to bring attention to Snorton’s emphasis on *continuous circulation* in the context of performing gender and Blackness simultaneously, as this conception of time plays directly into the alternative methods of musical timekeeping that I previously detailed. Snorton says that being trans in the context of Blackness is less about a fixed mode of identity (moving away from neoliberal identitarian logics also critiqued by Muñoz and Halberstam) and more about “a movement with no clear origin and no point of arrival.”⁸⁰ This, again, emphasizes the logic of trans time. Thus, Glenn-Copeland’s Blackness and transness are always already entangled with one another, and cannot be separated in the context of his life or his music. “Deep River” in particular raises ideas of performance in a way that moves beyond Butler’s theory of

⁷⁹ Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

gender performativity and into a realm that encompasses both *literal* performance and a more

nuanced understanding of the way that gender is always racialized. “Deep River” brings the past into the present, or rather complicates the barriers that have been artificially constructed between the two, and asks us to decenter teleological progressions of transition, historical time, and gender.

Colour of Anyhow (1970/2019)⁸¹

The version of “Colour of Anyhow” released on *Transmissions* is a recent live performance that features Glenn-Copeland and his touring band, Indigo Rising. As ever, it seems to transcend the limitations of genre, though it could be classified as a ballad. Sparse piano chords delineate a short 4 bar intro, soon joined by Glenn-Copeland’s voice in a middle register, along with bowed bass, guitar, and brushed snare drum. The song transforms into a unison duet between Glenn-Copeland and one of the band members for a wordless, guttural iteration of the melody, and then Glenn-Copeland branches off into a higher register, leaving the second voice behind in the lower range, their now distinct voices mingling with harmony in parallel motion. Glenn-Copeland then climbs even higher, to the height, it seems, of his comfortable range, driving through the phrase with his pristine vibrato. The two singers continue this way for the remainder of the track, which concludes with a shockingly deep, rumbling bass note, unhurriedly sliding to completion from a step above the tonic, and a twinkling, rolled chord from the keyboard.

⁸¹ Beverly Glenn-Copeland, “Colour of Anyhow” Recorded 2020. Track 4 on *Transmissions*. Transgressive Records Ltd. 1970/2020.

Listening to Glenn-Copeland’s 1970 self-titled album,⁸² we get a different version of the track--not exceedingly so, but different in several key ways. The band, of course, has changed.⁸³ But more to the point is that Glenn-Copeland himself has changed, physically, spiritually, and mentally. The older track is structured in much the same way, though it opens with guitar instead

of piano, and feels more upbeat from the get-go. Glenn-Copeland's voice, upon entrance, is much the same as the new live track. You can certainly tell that it's him, but anybody listening would code his voice as feminine, rather than masculine. He sings in the same key, and the same register, and breaks into wordless vocalizations in much the same way (although in this version, he sings alone, and is accompanied by flute). Bar for bar, he matches the register and pitch of the live version--but the points of strain are different. The high notes in this version are effortless, natural, while the low notes come from the same voice-on-the-edge-of-breaking that we hear in the higher section of the new track.

I say all of this not to make a spectacle of the changing transmasculine voice--it's obvious enough that his vocal range and quality would change as a result of hormone replacement therapy--but rather to illustrate a point about the way time operates in the context of musical recordings and musical performance. The 1970 album effectively documents and preserves forever a dysphoria-inducing voice, cementing and reiterating at will something that many trans people would not want preserved. After an interviewer plays back the original version of "Colour of Anyhow," Glenn-Copeland comments that when he recorded this album, it was "a time when [he was] still having to sound like 'whatever.'"⁸⁴ The difficulty of being confronted with this past recording seems to produce a reluctance to even speak into existence

⁸² Glenn-Copeland, Beverly. *Beverly Glenn-Copeland*. Recorded 1970. Transgressive Records Ltd. ⁸³ The 1970 album was recorded in one take alongside jazz giants of the time: Lenny Breau on guitar, Don Thompson on bass and piano, Terry Clarke on drums, and Jeremy Steig on flute. Naturally, this produced a tendency to classify the album as jazz, but Glenn-Copeland is adamant that it's not jazz--it's just jazz players. ⁸⁴ Red Bull Music Academy, "Beverly Glenn-Copeland on Finding Your Creative Voice."

what he had to sound like. It reflects a hesitancy to reify past identities, which would naturally be

difficult to reconcile with the recording itself being “set in stone.”

However, the beauty of musical performance, especially trans musical performance, is that it has the capability to un-set stone, so to speak. By re-performing and re-releasing a new version of “Colour of Anyhow,” Glenn-Copeland directly amends the past, reinscribing his voice and identity for himself and for an audience. This is not merely a matter of the sound of a trans person’s voice, but also of transing history and time.

La Vita (2004)⁸⁵

Glenn-Copeland doesn’t speak Italian, but one morning he woke up semi-fluent, wrote the lyrics to “La Vita,” then promptly forgot the language again.⁸⁶“La Vita” is an anomaly in a song, a testament to the “Universal Broadcasting System” that Glenn-Copeland credits as the divine source of all of his music--and is, in many ways, a trans anthem.

“La Vita” is organized into a series of verses, each one both different from and building on the next. The song begins unassumingly with two bars of driving drums, joined by an off-kilter xylophone in wide intervals that will undergird the rest of the song with its ostinato. The addition of a glimmering soprano voice singing a flowing melody in Italian completes the unlikely trifecta that underlies the duration of the song. It is not immediately clear whose voice this is, though the listener would likely gender it as female. Incongruous with its jerky, driving backdrop, the voice sings in long lines, as if floating on air:

⁸⁵ Beverly Glenn-Copeland, “La Vita” Recorded 2020, Track 4 on *Transmissions*, Transgressive Records Ltd. ⁸⁶ Where this come from

Per amore
Ascolta il
cantore
Lui che canta
Che la vita e
bella
Pace, pace
La vita e dolce
Grazie, grazie
Dal cuore,
grazie.

(For love
Listen to the
singer
He who sings
That life is
beautiful
Peace, peace
Life is sweet
Thank you,
thank you,
From the heart,
thank you.)

The operatic voice is then joined in duet by Glenn-Copeland, whose lower voice seems harried, choppy in comparison; he sings in short sentences, hammering out every word on the same note. His voice is devoid of vibrato, hurried and fighting for breath. The last word of each sentence rises by a whole step, and then a rest, as if to catch his breath. The Italian melody never falters, but rather hovers behind Glenn-Copeland's frenzy. He sings:

And I work and I work all day and night
I wonder if I'm ever gonna get it right
I push and I push to get ahead
I know I gotta make my daily bread

I know I don't have time to lose
I wonder if I really have time to choose
I barely have time to shed a tear
I hardly have time to shake the fear

Both the lyric and the sound of these two verses illustrates the logics of "straight time;" working day and night, pushing to get ahead, the incessant need to earn money in order to survive. The line "I wonder if I'm ever gonna get it right" implies that there is a *right to get to*, which in the context of a trans life is not the case. Glenn-Copeland's breathless words and

choppy delivery show the strain of this normative mentality for him as a trans person, as if he's

reading back something that he's being forced to sing. The second verse fixates on time, namely that there isn't enough of it; no time to lose, to choose, to cry, to dispel fear. Here, Glenn-Copeland is stuck in the stultifying present moment, the "here and now" that Munoz calls "a prison house."⁸⁷ The present of these verses is not a present in relation to an active past and a conceivable future, but rather a fixed point in straight time.⁸⁸ Released in 2004,⁸⁹ just a few years after Glenn-Copeland came out, these questions of time would have weighed heavily on his mind, in a very tangible sense; in middle-age, he would have felt pressed for time to begin his physical transition, and would have felt these anxieties about choosing to follow this life path. In many ways he would have felt pressure to expedite the process, so to speak, and these verses are a testament both to that drive, and to the pressure from society to be productive. Halberstam says that for queer subjects, time and space are outlined by the risks they are willing to take, giving as an example "subcultural musicians who risk their livelihoods by immersing themselves in nonlucrative practices."⁹⁰ Music-making, already a non-lucrative practice, is made even less intelligible in a capitalistic context by music-makers who occupy trans identities, like Glenn-Copeland; this section of "La Vita" puts into sound the constant pressure of capitalism.

The anxiety of these two verses, the driving drum beat, and the disjointed ostinato is amplified by the flowing operatic line that continues unceasingly behind Glenn-Copeland's voice. This melody is a source of trans time in "La Vita," as it harkens backward to Glenn-Copeland's musical practice pre-transition, and perhaps even further--to his days as a student studying voice, before his close brush with electroshock therapy and the pivotal moment

⁸⁷ Munoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ Glenn-Copeland released "La Vita" in 2004 on the album *Primal Prayer*, under the moniker "Phynix." In juxtaposition with his coming out and transition, this name feels like a true moment of self-making, of the phoenix rising from the ashes to fashion something new from the parts of something old.

⁹⁰ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 10.

when he began to write his own music. He essentially uses the musical language of his past self to deliver a message of peace and gratitude to his present self, and as this message filters through to Glenn-Copeland's verses throughout the course of the song, he becomes freer with his vocal expression and with his lyrics.

His voice loosens slightly with the next two verses, released from the nervous repetition of the same note:

And the body says "Remember you gotta breathe"
The body says "Take the time to grieve"

The mind says "Let the silence flow"
The mind says "Allow yourself to grow"

The spirit says "Cast your eyes above"
The spirit says "Fill your heart with love"

The heart says "Seek the light within"
The heart says "Let the dance begin"

The content of the lyrics is more liberatory, aligning more closely with the message of the trans-temporal operatic voice. The range of each line increases to a third, hovering on the higher note for the second half of each line, and the empty space between lines decreases, each one flowing more readily into the next. He moves from a space of anxiety and concern about deviating from normative modes of living, into a space of self-acceptance in body and in mind. In fact, the mind, and other aspects of being that aren't outwardly physical, figures more prominently here than the body itself, indicating that the transition of the body may not be as freeing or central for Glenn-Copeland as the transition of the mind.

The next verse simply repeats the phrase "My mother says to me 'Enjoy your life'" five times, and he loosens further, singing with greater range in more elongated and flowing shapes, his trademark vibrato coloring the last words of each line. This verse draws from a piece of

advice given to him by his mother when he was a child.⁹¹ Here, we see his comfort with himself

reach a new high through the act of repetition; he no longer drives toward a goal or a conclusion in sound or in phrase, rather revels in an infinite present that explicitly draws from his past (the Italian opera) and gestures toward his future (“enjoy your life”).

The form of “La Vita” is unique, and does not become clear until the last moment of the song. Ostensibly, the song does not have a chorus, rather a series of developing verses, always backgrounded by the same operatic line, as well as the driving “straight time” of the drums and xylophone; the undercurrent of both of these lines indicates that both the cramped, straight present and the expansiveness of trans temporality are always present, moving in awkward tandem. However, each verse, in text and in sound, brings Glenn-Copeland ever nearer to the freedom of the operatic voice. Only when he finally joins the operatic voice in octave unison does it become clear that this was the chorus all along; throughout, he never allows it to come through, always moving from one verse directly to the next. As the verses become ever more repetitious, as Glenn-Copeland finds himself in step with the underlying chorus, we see that ultimately, the logic of the song does not drive to a singular moment of climax, rather to a time of stasis, of verticality, of trans temporality. With this final unison chorus we see a refrain delayed, pushed back until seemingly the last moment. The form of the song itself says *it’s never too late*.

“La Vita” auralizes the life of an artist lived in trans time within a capitalistic society, emphasizing the contrast between the productive straight present and the indefinite narrative of trans experience. The juxtaposition of driving background and slow-moving operatic line narrate the tension between normative expectations and lived reality, the verse structure and lyrics externalizing a narrative of pressure and self-acceptance. Listening to “La Vita,” we are invited

⁹¹ Liner notes *Transmissions* vinyl

along on this intimate journey through trans time with Glenn-Copeland, enraptured from start to finish, with Glenn-Copeland's final spoken utterance of the comforting refrain; "Enjoy your life, darling."

Conclusion

Glenn-Copeland shows without question the necessity of an approach to music scholarship that centers trans subjectivities; without frameworks that explicitly detail what is *trans* about his music, an entire depth of field is lost in listening and in analysis. The practice of trans musicology that I put forward not only takes into account the voice and body in the analysis of performance, but also "transes" the time of music by contextualizing sound and form within trans time and trans history. This analytic of time is central to any analysis of Beverly Glenn-Copeland's music, and could certainly be applied to any number of trans folks who upset the boundaries of straight time. This framework also advances the growing field of trans musicology past a myopic lens that focuses unerringly on the sound of the voice and the appearance of the body, and the way these things interact in performance settings, getting to the heart of the music itself. An expansion of this practice could take into account more non-Western perspectives on gender and time, as well as apply the time analytic to other trans musicians and composers.

By nature, the practice of trans musicology looks to a queer utopian future; Glenn-Copeland himself professes a life philosophy that is always concerned with queer youth:

All the young people tell me they only hear about how selfish they are, they never hear how wonderful they are. I go--'Oh, this is the purpose of my life,' literally, that's when it hit me. I thought, 'Oh that's why nothing's happened till now.' I'm supposed to tell them how beautiful they are, and the music is only a way to talk to them and tell them how

thrilled we are, how much they are needed, how happy we are to see them.⁹²

Glenn-Copeland invokes future generations in his life philosophy in much the same way

Muñoz does in his analysis of a poem by James Schuyler; “When future generations are invoked, the poet is signaling a queerness to come, a way of being...that challenges the dominance of an affective world, a present, full of anxiousness and fear. The future generations are...the invocation of a future collectivity, a queerness that registers as the illumination of a horizon of existence.”⁹³ Glenn-Copeland’s words and music signal a horizon of queer possibility, a collective looking-forward that is bigger than his own spectacular arrival into himself. He is blissfully aware that the full potentiality of queerness is something that has not yet arrived, and is something to strive toward. Glenn-Copeland’s arrival into success is not a “claim to fame” in the way that this narrative has been normalized in our capitalist celebrity culture; he has not arrived into a capitalistic success story. Rather, he arrived into a queer futurity, as a guide and a beacon to those young folks who still have the power to realize the unmet potentiality of queerness and create a world in which success is not measured in terms of capital or normative life schedules. Glenn-Copeland *does the past* in his music *for the future*, using his own life experiences and those of his forebears to enact a music-making practice that is only static in the queerest way. The analytic of time is not meant to complete the picture, but rather act as a single element in a whole that is constantly evolving, and is, in the words of Glenn-Copeland, “ever new.”

⁹² *Keyboard Fantasies*, dir. Posy Dixon, 2020.

⁹³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 25.

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