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Alex Braden at (e)merge: Outside and Play

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Orphan, a 2012 installation by Alex Braden

Alex Braden is a sound artist practicing in the DC metropolitan area-- more specifically, out of our shared basement in South Arlington. His installations typically exploit the tension between focus and awareness, or investigate the impossibility of silence. I have the unique privilege of bearing witness to his process, and eavesdropping on the sounds floating up between the un-insulated floorboards. I

observe his interests and the research he does on myriad topics, solitary confinement, Kayne West, found sound, nut-job politicians, etc. His piece for (e)merge, *Outside and Play*, will draw attention to the difference between what we try to put in our ears and what actually ends up there-- this is really his thesis as an artist, drawing his sometimes disparate interests neatly together.

To experience the performance the audience will have Alex's pre-recorded score downloaded onto their personal devices and connected to their ears with headphones. As they hear the score, they will move through the garage space where 8-10 musicians will be playing unique, individual accompaniment written and rehearsed with Alex only, not with each other. He is totally frightened by what we (and many) perceive as cultural and personal devolution of physical human interaction, and therefore purposefully structures this piece around the necessity of earbuds. Another important factor here is that Alex will have the audience and the players attempt to press play simultaneously to begin the performance. This moment is where the interest lies for me. I have heard the piece (without the accompanying musicians) and it's simultaneously gorgeous, hilarious, and haunting. But that's not out of the ordinary for Alex, really it's expected. As his wife, I will be cringing in the corner hoping each instrument syncs up as intended, knowing it won't. To be clear, Alex is intending imperfection, it is not a goal of the piece to sound a certain way, he is more interested in isolation, interaction, distance. Regardless I'm still wondering what will happen as things go wrong. Will harmony persist through dissonance? Will it be beautiful dissonance or just really awful? How will the ability of the audience to move through the space, and choose which musicians they want to hear effect their experience?

***Outside and Play* will be performed Friday ONLY, at 1:30pm, 3:30pm and 6:30pm, in the garage of Capital Skyline Hotel. Bring headphones, and listening device with soundtrack downloaded.**

Free download + more info: <http://alexanderbraden.com>