# *Xylocyclos*

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## 1 Program Notes

*Xylocyclos* is a site-specific project originally developed in California's Mojave Desert, having since travelled across the United States and to Australia. Each performance features timber native to the performance site. For our performance at NIME, we've foraged our timber co-performers — our organic interfaces — up at Galambary/Black Mountain, on Ngunnawal country. Our instruments comprise bark and branches from scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus rossi*), brittle gum (*E. mannifera*), and broad-leaved peppermint gum (*E. dives*), as well as a particularly exciting follicle cone of Wallum Banksia (*Banksia aemula*).

When performing *Xylocyclos*, we attach inexpensive transducers and homemade piezo microphones to create feedback loops within the timber itself. The signal is minimally processed: there are no pre-recorded or synthesized sounds, only the natural frequencies of the wood reinforcing themselves and being amplified through pieces of bark. *Xylocyclos* is a portmanteau deriving from the Greek *xylo* (wood) and *cyclos* (cycle). Thinking carefully through the provenance, treatment, and materiality of our salvaged timber, we activate physical and poetic resonances across multiple cyclical scales. The sonic feedback operates at the scale of audible sound-waves. Moving the contact microphone mere millimetres can effect a profound shift in the overall sonic texture. We conceive of this as a sonic reimagination of microfluctuations within the natural environment, where minute variations in desert topology determine the way a rivulet chooses its course; where the play of sun and shadows determines the capacity of a plant to photosynthesize; where a pollinator's peregrinations determine which plants propagate.

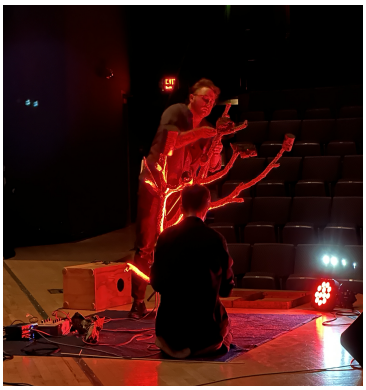


**Figure 1: Performing *Xylocyclos***

At this broader ecological scale, we are also thinking about cycles of life and death: our timber is all biologically dead, all in a transitional phase between aliveness and total decomposition. When reanimating the branches as sonic beings we emphasize their roles as sonically unpredictable co-performers. Rather than attempting to control the timber or its sonic output, we instead afford the branches a degree of agency, performing a non-hierarchical act of creative collaboration with these organic entities.

## 2 Technical Notes

Our setup is completely self contained; we do not need to output audio to the main mixer or speakers in the hall. In the past, performances of this piece have been about 18 minutes; however, the performance duration is flexible and can shrink or stretch according to the needs of the event. Our gear list is as follows, and all of it sits on a 6'x6' square mat on the stage floor (stage diagram below).

- foraged pieces of native timber (branches, bark, seed cones, etc.)
- various small implements

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- handmade performance mat (2 x 1.5m)
- 4 transducers
- 3 homemade contact mics
- 2 homemade controllers/interfaces
- 2 portable amps
- 2 sound interfaces
- laptop running Max/MSP

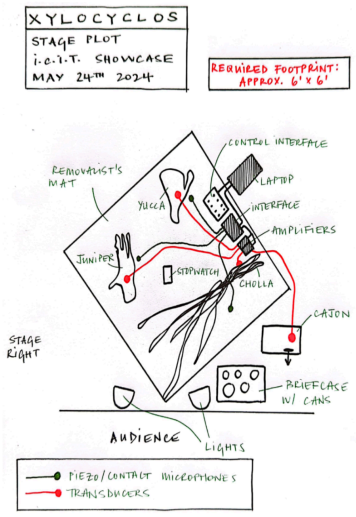



Figure 2: *Xylocyclos* stage plot

## 3 Media Link(s)

A video recording is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32oAYLdbGbI

## 4 Acknowledgments

*Xylocyclos* was originally developed in what is today known as Southern California, on the ancestral lands of the Serrano, Cahuilla, Chemehuevi and Mohave (Mojave) communities; and the Kizh, Acjachemen and Payómkawichum communities. We respectfully honor and recognize the original and current caretakers of this land, water, and air.

More recently, *Xylocyclos* has travelled to Naarm/Melbourne and Canberra, the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples; and the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, respectively. We pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging; and we acknowledge that these lands always were, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

## 5 Ethical Standards

This project did not involve participants other than the authors and meets ethical standards. There are no observed conflicts of interest in this project.

The timber sourced for performing *Xylocyclos* is sustainably foraged — we practice an ethics of care when selecting, preparing, and sounding out the wood. We only collect what we can carry; we always prioritise native species; and the timber is returned to the land after performance.