Ears Embiggening: Just Stop Already!

If you've seen my three other Big Ears preview articles (one, two, three) you have probably figured out that I have scheduled myself for way more shows than a single pair of ears can manage. The basic physics of time and dimension aside, there is probably only so much music you can actually *hear* in a given span of time before your ears grow dull and everything begins to burble along like grown ups talking in a Peanuts cartoon. But why stop now?

This article is kind of a grab bag piece, an odds and ends wrap up. Not to imlpy that any of this music is somehow lesser than or anything, just that it did not fit under the neat little categories I whipped up of articles 1-2-3.

A biggie in my book is the appearance of electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick, appearing Sunday at noon. You kids today with your synthesizers and samplers and stomp boxes…back in Morty's day, ya built your own damn noisemakers and ya liked it, I tells ya.

Seriously, Subotnick's earliest work predates the Moog synth, and his founding of the San Francisco Tape Music Center was a key historical event; Terry Riley and Pauline Oliveros made some of their earliest work there. Subotnick blazed a trail for Steve Reich and Eno and, for better or worse, literally every knob-twiddling noise artist of the past 60 years. Subotnick's own work is by turns soothing and jarring,

challenging and comforting. But this is the source code, people, and respect must be paid.

One of the obvious inheritor's of Subotnick's stream is Son Lux, a trio lately well-known for their soundtrack to *Everything Everywhere All at Once.* Son Lux is more compositionally formal than Subotnick, but the lineage is clear: the trio lixes their traditional instruments with electronics of all sorts to create living soundtracks. There will be a screening of *Everything* Friday at 10 a.m., followed by a conversation with Son Lux about scoring the movie. They appear in concert on Friday night and their guitarist, Rafiq Bhatia, has a solo set on Saturday evening.

(Speaking of films, there is a full-fledged film fest under the Big Ears banner all weekend long, as well as continuous screenings of films about Lonnie Holley at the UT Downtown gallery in conjunction with an exhibition of his art. You could spend the whole weekend there and be pretty damned happy about it.)

Concerts completely devoted to the works of composers Annea Lockwood, Eliane Radigue, Catherine Lamb, and Steve Reich are peppered across the schedule, and while this music is way outside my wheelhouse of purported expertise, everything I've listened to is fascinating and makes me want to hear it all. Among the performers in this series we find trumpeter Nate Wooley, new music ensemble Yarn/Wire, and three string quartets: Parker, Jack, and Mivos.

Kali Malone is a young American-Swedish composer who specializes in works for pipe organ. Her organ concert at St. John's Cathedral on Thursday night promises sonic transcendence, while her Saturday evening show will give another idea of the kinds of work Subotnick set in motion decades ago. She also has a program at the Knoxville Museum of Art on Saturday. *Living Torch*, performed twice, is an immersive electroacoustic piece that is perfect for the rich

acoustics of the museum’s atrium. Kind of essential, really.

Living Torch by Kali Malone

Another fest-within-a-fest is cooking in the singer/songwriter vein, with heavy hitters like Terry Allen, Andrew Bird, the Mountain Goats, Rickie Lee Jones. There’s a ton of bluegrass with folks like Bela Fleck and Sierra Hull. There’s an new music collective wandering around downtown on Friday performing a Robert Ashley opera, and plenty of electro dance pop, and a dose of wailing metal, and and and and I gotta stop and pack my suitcase now, but trust me…if you can’t find enough happening at Big Ears to fill your dance card you probably don’t like music very much, but even then you could go to the film fest, or just hang around Knoxville’s downtown square and watch people from around the world buzz around from one show to the next.

And then there is the free festival activity, with parades and films and concerts and whatever, I’m gonna stop now. If I have the time and psychic energy I’ll drop a dispatch or two during the festival and let you know what’s happening. Until then…

Go. Listen.