

50 Words

Clay's work centers place, nature, and community. His music aims to bring his audience closer to nature, each other, and the places that give the work meaning. He works in Michigan, where he works to build a community through music, finding ways to make his musical practice more sustainable and inclusive.

100 Words

Clay grew up in central Kentucky and moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan at eighteen. He studied composition and trombone through undergrad, and became heavily involved in Southeast Michigan's robust experimental and improvised music scene. His musical language was taken over by this local vernacular, and he's since written music influenced both by the artistic and political radicalism of the communities that surround him.

Clay now works as a professional engraver, focusing on non-standard and experimental notation. He remains in the Ann Arbor area, where he works to build a community through music, finding ways to make his musical practice more sustainable and inclusive.

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After graduating, he took time to explore non-musical interests. He got certified as an ESL instructor, and moved to Spain to teach arts and science in a Bilingual school. He also began involvement with long distance through hiking; a hobby that quickly began to inform the spirituality of his artistic work.

After a year in Chicago teaching new Americans at the Centro Autónomo de Albany Park, he returned to Michigan to get my Masters in composition. During this time, he started work as a professional engraver, focusing on non-standard and experimental notation. He remains in the Ann Arbor area, where he works to build a community through music, finding ways to make his musical practice more sustainable and inclusive.

350 Words

Clay was born in Kentucky and grew up there. He spent much of his childhood playing music, and started composing at a young age. He moved to Ann Arbor at eighteen, where he studied composition at the University of Michigan with professors Paul Schoenfeld, Kristen Kuster, Evan Chambers, Stephen Rush, and Erik Santos.

At the university, he was exposed to music from the American experimental tradition. He became enamored of the work of Cage, Young, Oliveros, M. Monk, J. L. Adams, Eno, free improvisors, folk musicians, and Fluxus artists. He was inspired by how alive performances from this cannon felt, and he sought to infuse his music with the chaos, patience, and radical simplicity at the heart of these artists' work.

During this time, he founded the Suburban Piano Quartet with three friends. They became active around Ann Arbor, making intermedia performance art and staging guerrilla performance events around town. They explored a radical, queer alternative to traditional paradigms of music making, making all decisions collectively and operating without hierarchy. They have, to date, produced nine evening-length works of original material and one album.

After graduating, Clay worked as an intern on farms in the Lake Superior region, moved to Spain, and undertook a number of self-supported backpacking trips. These sustained, mindful encounters with diverse communities and landscapes opened him to new affective and sensory worlds he would later evoke in his work. Conceptualizing his compositions as landscape paintings, rather than as narrative or emotional journeys, he sought to immerse audiences in the spare and organic beauty of the natural world.

As an artist, Clay strives to promote mindfulness and foster bonds of community, using his work to bring people closer to place, each other, and the natural world. Clay currently lives in Ann Arbor, where he continues to compose perform. In addition to music-making, he teaches English and is an active backpacker. He remains in the Ann Arbor area, where he works to build a community through music, finding ways to make his musical practice more sustainable and inclusive.