



**ARTS FORECAST** The [biennial Soundwave festival](#) (Sat/8-October 26) is one of those [incredible Bay Area experiences](#) that really connects music and performance with the feeling and history of life here: Soundbus tours have paired composers with eccentric travel routes, site-specific events have activated remote corners of local memory and geography, venues have filled with experimental sounds and acoustic marvels. Throughout it all, the sound art festival has been carefully attuned to what's going on in the broader culture, undergirding its programming with a fine sense of the present.

This year's Soundwave, entitled in full "Soundwave ((8)) Infrastructure" continues that intuitive tradition: "As modern tech culture has infiltrated Bay Area infrastructures--both physical and human--the history and culture of the region is shifting and the biennial explores how individuals and communities are reacting to such systematic changes. Soundwave ((8)) Infrastructure considers such freedoms allotted to citizens in the Bay Area who are currently facing rapid changes within the infrastructure of housing, communities, safe spaces, transit systems, and job opportunities. These infrastructural elements reflect much more than how something is made or moved; they also share a relationship with an individual who is impacted by them."

This focus on changing infrastructure manifests in the festival in a couple ways. First, the actual structure of it: This is the first one to include guest curators for the performances, under the auspices of chief curator Tanya Gayer. The guest curators "have backgrounds in theater, dance, film, social practice, and music to create a biennial that considers sound from many angles," and will present unique programs brimming over with fellow performers.

"My idea coming into the festival was that I wanted to branch out into other communities," Gayer told me. "We didn't want to just fall into a certain niche. I was so curious about what other curators and artists were doing. Beyond the opportunity to work with people I've wanted to work with for a long time, I wanted to know who we weren't reaching. What communities hadn't intersected with Soundwave yet?"



*Percussionist Marshall Trammell performs as Part of 'Black Fighting Formations,' October 13.*

That diversification naturally led to a focus on diversity. “A really important mission of the biennial is engaging people of color, and to give value to that engagement.” This shows with the inclusion of guest curators like Ryanaustin Dennis, who’ll be presenting [“Black Fighting Formations \(BFF\): Sonic Narratives of Performing-Political Education”](#) on October 13, and curator Sarita Ocón, whose September 21 [“Hidden Refuge :: Refugio Escondido”](#) explores the decolonization of patriarchal infrastructures and environments through performance ritual and sound art.” Both feature a multitude of artists of color.

Another thought Gayer had coming into the festival was how to rethink what constituted sound art. There’s no better example of this than curator Sophia Wang’s opening event, Sat/8 at Counterpulse, entitled [“HVAC: Thermal Comfort.”](#) Gayer said, “Sophia’s project contemplates ambient systems like heating and air-conditioning and how our bodies reside in the spaces affected by them, by this combination of

natural and unnatural effects. How these infrastructures in buildings can dictate the way we exist in and move through a space.”

Gayer, currently the exhibitions manager at Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, herself has a showcase, October 26’s [“Wall”](#) at the Internet Archives, featuring experimental music and video duo XUXA SANTAMARIA, creating “a video maze stitched together from video games, Second Life, early screensavers, chat rooms, Myspace, and other renditions of physical architecture from a virtual realm that are drawn from the holdings of the Archive.”

“There’s so much out there from underground club culture, gaming, visual arts, political expression and organizing, that can be seen under the umbrella of sound art. It’s a dynamic area,” Gayer said. “A lot of people when they think of sound art they think of a very serious white guy standing behind a laptop. We’re obviously trying to think beyond that.” [More Soundwave \(\(8\)\) Infrastructure info here.](#)