This collaboration, based on the childhood game of telephone, involved nine musical groups/artists, nine choreographers, and twelve dancers! The 19 different works of performing art were each created based on, or in response to, a previous work, alternating between music and dance. Each of the works is notated below with a number to indicate its place in the creative process of this project. Photos of the dances created to each piece of music are included.

The Keening Curve by Russell Podgorsek (2021)
Song #1. Number in Telephone Order: 1
Composed by Russell Podgorsek
Performed by The New Dawn String Quartet: Arlette Townsend and Leah Quigley (violins), Heidi Snyder (viola), Adam Riggs (cello).

The piece is an expression of my anxiety about the impending climate catastrophe and frustrations regarding our collective short-sightedness in not enacting immediate and serious change to prevent it. The title is a combination of "The Keeling Curve" - a graph of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from 1958 to present - and "keening" - wailing in grief for the dead.
Stanislav Grof's Holographic Universe (2022)
Song #2. Number in Telephone Order: 3
Composition and Performance: Mikhail Lantsov, Sophie Ernstrom, and Gregory Furness

Our aim with this project was to stay true to the game of telephone: take the message, embellish a little, and pass it along in hopes that it will continue transforming. We started by searching for a theme within the dancers’ movements and finding the tempo. We then created an atmosphere that captured the feeling of the choreography and continued to add rhythms that complimented the dancers' expressive movements while venturing a bit into new territory. We utilized drums from another collaborator who chose not to be included in the rest of the process.

The title of the piece, "Stanislav Grof's Holographic Universe" is a reference to holography, invented by Dennis Gabor in the 1940's for which he received the Nobel Prize, and the work of psychologist Stanislav Grof. Grof was inspired by how holograms are made: light passes through a specially printed film that defracts and creates a three-dimensional image. If that sheet of film is cut into pieces, each smaller piece can reproduce the totality of the original image. He analogized this to the way we construct reality through our minds, that within each person and experience is the projection of the entire universe. The metaphor can also be conjured if you look close at a tiny morning dew drop. Even though it’s small, it reflects the entire yard around it, and so too do our little individual experiences reflect all of human possibility. This theme arose near the end of our process and wrapped the piece up nicely.
My process was to first watch the dance and just get an overall feel for the attitude and emotion that I felt from the performance. I then went back and looked for visual cues that I could translate into musical characteristics such as a sudden change in movement or a more uniform segment. My interpretation of the dance eventually coalesced into a mini narrative of my own which provided a musical theme and direction for the audio piece. The cool thing about this project is now someone else gets to write their own story based on this tune!
Hourglass (2022)
Song #4. Number in Telephone Order: 7
Composition and Performance: Jake Cacciatore and Jon “Goody” Goodman

“Hourglass” was composed, arranged, and recorded by Jake Cacciatore (bass guitar, lead
guitar and drums) and Jon “Goody” Goodman (electric piano, mandolin and synthesizer.) Jake
and Goody have been collaborating musically for several years, but ‘Hourglass’ marks the duo’s
first foray into composition. It was a delight crafting a song to exist alongside such powerful and
unique choreography.
Upon watching the dance to which I was to create music, I noticed that the work seemed to have two main sections: a section frequently on the floor and a showy climax with leaps. I also noticed very little repetition throughout the dance. Though some of the movements themselves were repeated, they were altered or reordered throughout the dance work. After a brief intro, the main dance begins with a consistent two-bar rhythmic pattern that maintains a similar contour of low and high notes, yet each pattern is at least slightly different each time, often in unpredictable ways, allowing the listener to both feel at ease with the consistent rhythm, while constantly remaining a bit uneasiness due to the changing notes. These features were used to help highlight the mix of humor and unpredictability in the dance. The intro returns prior to the showy climax of the work which connects with the dancer’s multiple leaps, turns, and faster motions as if a warlock were casting a big windstorm. The work finishes with the identical intro/middle statement and a closing note to end the spell. The use of “Warlock” in the title also pays homage to the composer Peter Warlock who frequently composed with unexpected slight rhythmic and chromatic alterations.

Michael Linert (left)

Below: Rehearsal and performance photos from “Wishy Washy,” choreographed by Mykayla Solorio. Dancer: Camila Serrano
**Automatic Stop** (2022)  
Song #6. Number in Telephone Order: 11  
Composition and Performance: Shoaler

“Automatic Stop” is an upbeat, breezy new wave song strongly inspired by classic ‘80s summer jams as well as the early ‘10s synthpop revival. The slow ambient-ish intro came to me immediately when I saw the beginning of the dance video, and it seemed natural to launch into a catchy pop song when the energy of the dance changed. I love the high-energy sound of big synths and modulated guitars so I couldn’t resist the urge to make a big dance jam. I’ve also been obsessed lately with the Mellotron flute sound (most famously used at the beginning of Strawberry Fields Forever) so I stuck a bit of that in as well. It was a very new and exciting challenge to match the song up to a dance performance and I had a lot of fun figuring out how to come up with sounds that would fit the motions. The time limit also forced me to get outside my comfort zone and commit to decisions even though I didn’t have a clear vision going in. Overall, this was a very exciting and refreshing project for me and I’m looking forward to seeing how it continues to develop.
**Alright (2022)**  
Song #7. Number in Telephone Order: 13  
Composition and Performance: Moodlighting’s Sophie Gullet (vocals) and Alex Goetz (guitar, bass, drums)

During the first watch of our video, we were inspired by the way that the two dancers were separate and moving independently from one another, but also came together and moved together. From this, we decided to have two main guitar parts to reflect the duality of the dancers. The guitars are sometimes acting separately, and sometimes coming together to intertwine. This is also true of the vocals - on the final chorus, there are two parts that come together and move apart. The lyrics reflect this idea of duality of identity, specifically the duality of a single person's identity as they work to find themselves and fit different pieces in with the rest. The energy of the song reflects the energy of the dance, picking up when the movements are faster and slowing down when the movements are slower. We added more discordant guitar sounds to reflect the sometimes sporadic nature of the dancers’ movements as well. These sounds and movements may seem out of place at first, but find their place in the overall scene or sound.

From left to right: Alex Goetz and Sophie Gullet of Moodlighting  
Above: Behind the scenes photo and still (below) from “Let’s reign this in,” a dance film created by Timothy Bruno and featuring Dazzmin Brown, Megan Roney, Camila Serrano, Mykayla Solano, and Natalie Vinyard-Houx
Arcane Revelation (2022)
Song #9. Number in Telephone Order: 15
Composition and Performance: Thunderboogie

Thunderboogie is: Jake Downey (Bass), Ryan Wheale (Drums), Jon “Goody” Goodman (Keyboards), Pedro Urbina (Guitar), Brian Degase (Guitar)

I’ve always dreamed of writing music for a dance performance and this “telephone” format was so unique. Receiving the silent dance video, it was clear how much work had to be done. First was establishing the tempo and time signature, which proved to be a challenge, especially being someone who often writes in odd time signatures because it seemed like so many different times fit the movement. After establishing the rhythm, the blank canvas was daunting. The process in writing was looping the video for hours and playing my bass to the dance until bursts of inspiration would come and the song started to take form. A definite story began to reveal itself in the dance, beginning with a sense of whimsical folly, then abruptly shifting into very serious passages. The climax of the dance builds up to a moment where half of the troop delivers a secret to the others, and they rejoice in a dance full of power and precision. To me the dance as a whole was a brilliant portrayal of the fool’s journey, the call out of ignorance on to the path of enlightenment. The call which beckons the fool to begin his journey is indeed the arcane revelation which all who have begun have heard.
Arabian Labyrinth (2022)
Song #9. Number in Telephone Order: 17
Composition and Performance: Saint Somebody

Saint Somebody is: Justin Spicer (bass guitar), Allison Stroh (vocals), Eric Dill (Octopad), Adam Riggs (cello),

This piece of music has found its way into being just as our band is forging its way into existence. We’ve all heard it said, and surely observed for ourselves, that it takes a while to get to know someone. Our emotive dancer, Natalie, tumbles to the floor and resiliently rises, just as our band has endured duress and, time and again, willed its way to recover. Adversities including the call to quarantine, demands of discouraging jobs, stress of career changes, slashed tires, pain of surgery, flames of a house fire, grief from losing a father, and aggravation brought by misaligned, temporary members have challenged our band’s chances to live. Through our difficulties, we’ve rolled, tumbled, and risen together. When, more than in difficult times, do we find the friends who turn out to be family? Gathering to collaborate and compose our part of The Telephone Project, we found ourselves in a small circle of musicians we’ve all come to know, respect, enjoy, trust, and celebrate as family. A musical key and simple melodic theme were plucked from the ether. From there, we danced with Natalie, over and over, listening and feeling as our truly balanced collaboration emerged. It is an honor to be included in this remarkable community creation. Thank you for including us in this dance, for offering us creative sustenance, and for supporting our band as we tumble, roll, arise, and soar. We are Saint Somebody and this piece is our Arabian Labyrinth.
Accord (2022)
Song #19. Number in Telephone Order: 19
Composition: Russell Podgorsek
Performance: New Dawn String Quartet: Arlette Townsend and Carrie Beeder (violin), Heidi Snyder (viola), Adam Riggs (cello).

I’d intended to write a complementary piece to The Keening Curve but the choreography I got had such a sense of optimism that it demanded something quite different. I charted the dance in roughly 30-second-long blocks and tried to write music that fit the mood of the choreography and some of the "motivic" elements while also making sense musically, moment to moment, and having a clear form. It helped that I’d written music to dance before and tried to be a little too precise, whereas on this project, I took a more generalized approach and was much more successful. Starting the game of "telephone" with something so bleak and ending here also sends an affirming message about where we’re headed and what we might be able to achieve when we cooperate.

Performance of “Accord” by New Dawn String Quartet with the “Tensity,” dance piece that inspired it.

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