

babbling by Meesh Sara Fradkin

Artist's note:

These two works offer some of what could have been with *babel*—the first piece is a result of at least sixty of the sonified words manually triggered in a specific order, while the second is only one of the sonified words. In the gallery space, *babel* presented unending combinations of sounds. But, whether or not it was activated outside of its idle mode was decided by the audiences' personality (and whether or not they were speaking out loud with company).

Sound design by Meesh Sara Fradkin.

Captions by Cheryl Green in collaboration with Meesh Sara Fradkin.

Transcriber's note:

babel can be very layered in the gallery, and the first video presented as part of *babbling* can be too. The layers are made when two or more sounds are combined to play at the same time, creating a neat effect called “polyphonic sound”. In the first video, the captions fill up the screen and stack on top of each other to match. The words sometimes layer so much that it can be hard to read. The transcript below has the captions in the order they show up in the video, listing the start time of each caption, how long each caption lasts, and whether its color is fire-engine red, bright white, or emerald green. Times are listed in minutes and seconds.

Transcript for video 1

00:00 (lasts the whole video, starting red, then green, then red, then white): shifting squares are processing but not so patiently over an unmovable steady deep buzz. chimes are lusciously tapped, almost creating a melody—ever avoiding a steady rhythm. high notes debate low notes, taking turns, interrupting, fast, slow, syncopated up and down the scale.

10:02 (4 seconds, red): an incisive buzz comes and goes.

11:03 (37 seconds, green): squares are louder, more joyous, accompanied by beepy boppy shaking notes, fast and staccato cashing each other and tumbling down a surprisingly gentle slope.

00:16 (10 seconds, white): an immovable deep buzz holds steady while higher notes, beeps, and plinks gyrate and skip. high notes hold steady with the deep buzz, then explode into luminous tone long, short, echoing, wheeling, zapping. buzzes and tones fade but cut out before disappearing.

00:28 (15 seconds, green): layers of spindly gears grinding and glinty chimes ever-ringing create a bed both steady and wavering. grinding stops, leaving pulses from chimes, their metal matte but scratchy.

00:42 (5 seconds far away, white): an alarm turns on three times, echoing three times on the third.

00:48 (5 minutes and 9 seconds, red): layers of smooth, overlapping tones throbbing with steady crackle beneath. growing louder, the throb holds its tempo perfectly. layers drop out bit by bit, the throb never vanishing. all fade away into dry plaster and old documents, scraping through a dark, long, abandoned hallway.

00:51 (2 minutes and 33.5 seconds, white): the shifting squares re-start from the beginning—luscious taps against chimes, almost creating a melody, ever avoiding a steady rhythm.

00:57 (2 minutes and 27.5 seconds, green): now alone with the chimes and the scraping in the hallway.

01:06 (21 seconds, white): fast, skittish beeps interwoven with one long, tense tone cutting through the middle.

01:11 (1 second, green): a buzz quickly glides through.

01:14 (18 seconds, green): animated twinkly beeps, high and low, flitter and flutter in every direction all at once.

01:25 (10 seconds, white): sine tone appears, growing, fighting the chimes.

01:28 (10 seconds, green): scintillating notes up a scale, fuzzy static, blips. now a rainstorm of electric static falls. rain storm passes, leaving reverberating brilliance, sparkling crackles. fluorescent lights buzz, and high voltage tones swoop overhead. soft buzzes.

01:32 (8 seconds, white): there are less directions, but the beeps continue.

01:42 (8 seconds, green): another alarm sounds itself, pulsating.

01:45 (3 minutes and 44 seconds, green): dry plaster and old documents again, scraping through a dark, long, abandoned hallway. popping, fizzing crackle loud and

close. layers of spindly gears grinding and glinty chimes ever-ringing create a bed both steady and wavering. grinding stops, leaving pulses from chimes, their metal matte but scratchy.

03:24 (2 minutes and 32 seconds, white): more scraping in the hallway.

04:30 (6.5 seconds, white): a far away train crashes into confusion.

04:33 (14 seconds, white): something explodes, going, going, static and rubble fill the air.

04:48 (1 minute and 37 seconds, white): frenetic race of tiny, dazzling, twinkling beeps climbing up, jumping down, laughing, twisting down a spiral slide.

04:56 (16 seconds, white): fluttering charged with gnarled pulses of energy, scraping high and low. buzzes and zaps build over fluttering, notes race up and down the scale. brash explosion. ripples of fine, translucent oil slipping down.

05:36 (24 seconds, red): whimsical percussive tick-tick-tick. now punctuated and random intervals with a dampened chime, a click, a non-harmonizing dampened chime. a breath, then slowly, slowly, the ticks lightly intersperse with chimes, clicks, and total silence.

05:40 (6 minutes and 10.5 seconds, white): twinkly fluttering like a robotic dove flitting near, then far, then near again.

06:03 (1 minute and 43 seconds, green): luscious taps against chimes, almost creating a melody, ever avoiding a steady rhythm.

06:05 (39 seconds, red): a clarion call, crisp and bright, colored by light tinkling. the call fades, leaving electronic tinkling to glisten, then fade. frenetic race of tiny, dazzling, twinkling beeps climbing up, jumping down, laughing, twisting down a spiral slide.

06:16 (49 seconds, red): long, reedy tones holding nearly perfectly steady. most tones suddenly drop out, leaving one lone high note.

06:56 (19 seconds, red): a high tone wiggles awake, then joined by a lower tone, each steady, they bump against each other. now, they merge and resonate like an old phone dial tone, a resonant chord. the high tone drops out, leaves the low tone a moment before silence.

07:04 (16 seconds, red): luscious metallic ringing. ringing is joined by a steady tone that warbles against the ringing. now, just the tone, long and clean.

07:29 (8 seconds, red): a line of ants rush and race, their tiny legs stirring up glittery sand. at even intervals, a pop. ants disappear at the sound of a chime.

07:36 (1 minute and 28 seconds, red): one glossy tone starts, others build on: scintillating notes up a scale, fuzzy static, blips. now a rainstorm of electric static falls. rain storm passes, leaving reverberating brilliance, sparkling crackles. fluorescent lights buzz, and high voltage tones swoop overhead. soft buzzes and crackles. over the crackles, an ominous tone grows, fluttering and abrasive, rising up the scale.

08:46 (1 minute and 36 seconds, green): ray gun burps awake, fires jumbled pulses. the ray gun powers higher, then back down.

08:48 (41 seconds, green): sparkling jangles, like chains being slid in fits across a slick marble floor.

08:56 (51.5 seconds, green): long, sticky static, a ticking timer in the far background.

08:56 (34 seconds, red): distant helicopter blades, electric buzz sweeping through a nearby powerline. the buzz dissipates, the helicopter hovers, blades sweeping in a fast, quivering blur. another helicopter, deeper tones, swoops in, circles the first and circles and circles. the quivering blades electrify and brighten. crackles in a nearby line as helicopters continue to hover and swirl.

09:29 (10.5 seconds, red): a mid-tone holds, slick and smooth, as one by one, more tones slide in over and under the first. the bass drops out as one tone wavers and chimes, the others holding steady. the brightest yet slips in on top, they all fade away.

09:41 (52.5 seconds, red): sand paper pushed and pulled across a rough surface, reverberating and pulsing but never wearing the surface down.

09:44 (1 minute and 40 seconds, red): bright, spirited beeps, chimes, and plinks jetting across the soundscape constantly overlapping and changing places, high, low, middle. chimes fall away, leaving the jetting beeps tumbling. now most beeps fall away, leaving a quick, syncopated race to the end.

10:00 (39.5 seconds, red): eerie distant tone, suddenly met with one pure tone. the eerie sound grows louder, wobbles against the pure tone as they both rise. now softening, the pure tone gone, leaving the gauzy pulse of the eerie tone. fades slowly, slowly, slowly.

10:16 (23 seconds, red): an emergency warning tone layered over with ships in a harbor pulsing an indecipherable message. all thin, quiet, fade away.

10:32 (17 seconds, red): stifling whirl that rings and fizzes.

10:40 (1 minute, 10 seconds, green): prickly buzz holds steady. a light breeze wafts over the prickles, growing into a windstorm through spikes. hiccup to higher-pitched buzz as wind continues building in chords louder and louder. buzz holds its place as wind tones bubble and reach frantically higher. wind replaced with higher and faster bubbles as buzz continues prickling. now, nothing but a pure-tone squeal, high and bright.

Transcript for video 2

00:00 (16 seconds, red): a high tone wiggles awake, then joined by a lower tone, each steady, they bump against each other. now, they merge and resonate like an old phone dial tone, a resonant chord. the high tone drops out, leaves the low tone a moment before silence.

00:16 (3 seconds, red): silence.