

Magda Mayas

“Memory piece”

How do I communicate and interact with space?

How can I make the details of my listening available to the audience so they feel as involved as I am?

How do amplified and acoustic piano sounds blend in a room?

These are some of the underlying questions of my research, where I am trying to find a more engaged relationship with space, sound and the listener through transmitting my listening experience to others.

Memory piece is a work for amplified piano and playback, mapping a space through superimposing recorded and live performance in a multi speaker set up.

I have developed a vocabulary for internal piano music making, using preparations and objects that become extensions of the instrument itself.

Through these extensions, I am exploring and experimenting with a grand piano, objects, microphones, speakers and space within the realm of improvised music. The relationship between these elements and their subsequent relationship to me is in constant flux, and with it my role as a performer or listener.

I amplify the piano with 4- 6 microphones within a multiple speaker set up, with the piano in the middle of the space and the audience sitting or walking around it.

The routing of microphones and speakers emulates the pianos architecture in the room, its layout and different registers are mapped in the space. By doing this I virtually expand the piano to the size of the entire room, creating an immersive feeling for the audience of being inside the piano in a similar listening position as myself, with my head inside the piano, enveloped by the surrounding sounds.

This allows the audience to experience many facets and details of sound and to be part of the creative process in a more immediate way, shaping the music with their listening.

My musical choices are now also informed by *where* a sound happens in space, mapping and communicating space through sound. The amplification becomes a compositional element, diffusing or directing timbre, and allows for even subtler soundscapes to emerge.

Documenting and recording the process of performing in a multi speaker set up (mostly quadrophonic), led to the idea of *Memory piece*:

I recorded myself playing in this set up, improvising short pieces. I then took segments of these recordings to compose a condensed piece, as a sound protocol of that experience and a playback to improvise with in a new multi speaker performance.

The speakers project the sound of the live amplified piano as well as the pre-recorded sounds.

That way, I expose myself to the changes in my playing: I hear myself responding to the piano map from another room and occasion, with its own in-built environment, projected into a new space. I respond to it in the moment, with a piano map in this new space, adding manifold sonic and psychological layers.

Hence the recording becomes more than a document of a process, it becomes a memory that is both spatial, and a reminder of a gesture and a sound, as I am improvising with it and simultaneously experiencing my interaction with different spaces.

The compositional process of working with the playback helps me remember, interact and analyze that memory of a space and my performance within it. The spatial simultaneity of multiple recordings and live amplification, often featuring similar material, gives me the chance to consciously listen to space distinct from its function as an enhancement of sounds, but as a separate spatial experience.

Memory piece becomes a research method:

The material is constantly evolving; the playback is replaced by new sound protocols of new spaces I perform in. Consequently, I am confronted with different sound environments and my performance within them. I record this new performance again, and am then presented with even more layers of time and material.

The sound of a string being plucked could be pre-recorded or live or both at the same time. It also enables and encourages listeners to compare perceptions of “the same work”, under different listening conditions and contexts.