

Reflection on the origin of the project, your role in the project, its questions, process and publication

Live Memory Piece

Per Anders Nilsson, Magda Mayas

Abstract

In this concert piano-player and doctoral candidate Magda Mayas and professor Per Anders Nilsson cooperates in a performance where prepared piano and live sampling are at the forefront. An important asset is that both live sounds from the piano, as well the electronically processed sounds, are diffused in a quadraphonic loudspeaker system surrounding the audience. An aesthetical idea is that the listeners shall be embedded in sounds, as if being inside the piano.

The Core Project

This project started in Magda Mayas ongoing doctoral investigations. Among here research questions one can mention: How can we best amplify the prepared or inside piano? How does the amplified and acoustic sound blend in a room? What does specialization mean in the context of my performance and how do I develop concepts of spatializing sounds further?

Magda has created a situation where sounds are transmitted not only from the acoustic piano, but also through a multiple speaker system. Questions of sound diffusion and acoustic and amplified blend, audience positioning, directionality and using space as an instrument surfaced and made her realize that she wants and needs to take these questions into account and to refine and evolve her performances accordingly.

The relationship of sound/timbre and space is at the core of the investigation. Amplification means using and controlling space in a different way, creating a space within a space. It turns space into a more active instrument simply by increasing the possibilities of sound diffusion and directionality, allowing to decide where a sound comes from and when. By engaging with microphones and speakers on a deeper level and letting their qualities and aesthetic surface, which in turn impact the playing.

The grand piano is a very static and immobile instrument - more than any other acoustic instrument perhaps. While other acoustic instrument players may move around in space, with more or less comfort and ease, the piano remains in one fixed position. Amplification is not only a way to create an immersive listening experience, it also allows to move sound around, to be more active and in control and play with space as an instrument as well, improvising with all elements that define a performance.

Memory Pieces

An important concept for Mayas is her so-called *memory pieces*. A memory piece is in fact an electro acoustic composition, consisting entirely of recorded prepared piano sounds performed by Magda, however carefully edited and arranged as a composition in its own right. In a concert

setting, a duet can be heard between the pre-made and replayed electroacoustic composition, the memories, and live playing. The idea in this concert however, is that Per Anders Nilsson replaces the static memory piece, by playing live-electronics with pre-recorded and live-sampled piano sounds from Mayas. Nilsson has previously investigated and invented a number of digital musical instruments aimed for live sampling, some of them discussed in his thesis *A Field of Possibilities* from 2011. Nilsson's instruments and part of his aesthetics differ from Mayas: in a memory piece the sounds are unprocessed and carefully ordered, and unfold as if played live, whereas Nilsson creates ambient acoustic spaces, which rather relies on, and emphasizes, repetitive elements in different time scales, from micro to meso time. The resulting musical outcome is a mix of Mayas playing, embedded in and surrounded by her own sounds played by Nilsson.