International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression

NIME 2021 Showcase

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Project Title

Virtual Concert

Project Author

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1. ABSTRACT

Virtual Concert enables the audience to perform, instead of only observe, on the virtual meeting platform. Welcomed by a detached AI voice transmitted as if through a tannoy (public address) system, the audience become performers as they are instructed to create musical and non-musical material by the given announcements. Through this process, the conventional composing method of creating sound or music forms the works existence is reversed, as indeterminate content is generated through audience interaction via Zoom. The audience unwittingly forms an ensemble-like status, engaging in time passing, connecting with each other anonymously via chat rooms, watching a page load, and interpreting pieces of complex contemporary music.

The game-like narrative, structured by text score instructions, comments on our interaction with, and time spent, on the internet. Making an implicit reference to the closing boundary between our learning from machines and machines learning about us, for example YouTube's algorithm, Zoom becomes both a concert venue and new 'musical instrument', capitalising on its interface and technological capabilities to enable a direct role for the audience to play in musical creation and performance. By conceptualising the virtual meeting platform in this way, the audience form an integral part in the compositional process, as well as the works realisation.

2. REQUIREMENTS

Equipment: Zoom. The Zoom link will need to be made public for the audience to join.

Performers: The audience attending the concert will become performers of Virtual Concert.

Feasibility: The world premiere of Virtual Concert took place in December 2020 during an online concert presented by Post-Paradise Series.

3. PROGRAM NOTES

In Virtual Concert the audience become performers as they interpret spoken instructions, creating musical and non-musical material which gives the work form. Through this process, the conventional composing method of creating sound or music forms the works existence is reversed, as indeterminate content is generated through audience interaction via Zoom. The audience unwittingly forms an ensemble-like status.

As communication failure caused by broadcasting errors and low bandwidth becomes material, Zoom is conceptualised as a performance space and mediator for composing, commenting on our interaction and relationship with the internet.

4. BIOGRAPHY

Zach Dawson is an experienced composer-performer and curator based in Shropshire (UK). He is currently undertaking his PhD at University of Birmingham, with cross-institutional supervision from De Montfort University, funded by AHRC's Midlands4Cities Partnership. He co-curates experimental concerts for [Post-Paradise Series](#) and produces notated electronic music under the experimental duo [7balcony](#).

His current practice centres on the idea that music is becoming something which is 'unlistened' to and ever-present in the everyday, meaning its existence as a complete form is fundamentally challenged. Creating music based on the concept of 'open duration', where material exists indeterminate of duration, he explores how music's ontological status is recuperated and recontextualised after the internet.

Zach has self-produced several records and publications including; 'Forever Returning' (keyboard, samples, soprano) in 2020, 'exclusive' (violin, synthesizer), 'Forever Grave' (synthesizer), and 'St. Vitus' (field recordings, samples) in 2019, 7balcony's debut EP (featuring fadin' / dyin') in 2018, and 'Forever Grey' (publication) co-produced with stenton.press. He has performed his music at many festivals; Ten Acres of Sound in 2020, Birmingham Record Company NMC Launch, Eastside Projects, Centrala Art Gallery, and Thinking/Not Thinking in 2019, Supersonic Festival, Ideas of Noise Festival, and Birmingham Frontiers Festival in 2018. Recent commissions include; site-specific performance-installation presented on Zoom (supported by Post-Paradise Series and Hinrichsen Foundation), sound design for podcast series 'Otherwise Silent' (supported by a-n), scored music for feature-length film 'Yādadāśata', co-supported by and presented at Asylum Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (UK), and

instrumental pieces for Ensemble Klang (premiered at Gaudeamus Muziekweek 2018) and Orkest de Ereprijs (awarding a chamber prize at the 22nd YCM).

5. LINKS

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

Virtual Concert

External (opens in new tab):

<https://youtu.be/1mOS4pr-ihM>

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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