

Hybrid Piece

for ZOOM Orchestra and ROOM Orchestra

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra: Filming Improvisation - Improvising with Film

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra have a fluid and multi-dimensional (perhaps even quantum or multi-versal) approach to filming improvisation and improvising with film.

Film can be a structuring role within the music, or film can explode and implode where and when that music is *situated* - essentially a band can play *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once* – using telematic *digital* video-conferencing technology and/or the *physical* theatre apparatus – sometimes ALL AT ONCE.

Before March 2020 the majority of our practice saw us playing as a ROOM orchestra - in physical proximity, in a room. We spread across that room in a circle so we can anticipate and listen, not just with our ears but with our eyes, curious to eachothers musical and physical gestures - every player in the best seat in the house.

We break up the idea of discrete string/wind/brass sections to allow saxophone and theremin for example to fuse in unexpected ways – each prising/drawing out previously unheard acoustic qualities from the other.

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra has free improvisation at the core of our practice but we also explore projecting graphic scores, primarily to distribute our creativity (to re-prioritise chosen voices / creating pools of focus / building morphologies of change and spotlighting voices) such as:

- Delhi based sound artist Surbhi Mittal's Unbound (a watercolour score distributing the creativity with gold scribes to trigger voices, and amorphous puddles of blue, purple and green for electronics – to encourage the orchestra to lean into the River Yamuna's sense of omniscient time, rather than humans' default linear sense of time)
- Another included animated, painterly film from visual artist Mario Rossi with a conductor-facilitator to direct a precise time-stamped musical score of text instructions referencing Hollywood and Italian film-score motifs.

Performers can jump and switch musical identities by building new instruments or playing props and DIY contraptions:

- see a hardware store tubing flute from Alvin Curran
- and the “object” welded by Raymond MacDonald and co-designed by he and Chimere, an Artificial Intelligence being.

Orchestra members like George Burt can deal out a score, on a post-it-note Impro-certo after Harry Beckett, that sets up a dynamic “musical chairs” where performers jump out of their seats to “play at” being the conductor, or the soloist.

(Gioglobal context **TELEMATIC MUSIC MAKING**)

On Monday 23rd March 2020, our Prime Minister instructed us to stay at home to minimise the spread of COVID-19. On Tuesday 24th March 202, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra were due to play together in the Glasgow Center for Contemporary Arts. So on Tuesday 24th March 202, Day 2 of the first national lockdown, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra decided to play their instruments on ZOOM instead.

Between Raymond MacDonald, Tia DeNora, Maria Sappho, Robert Burke, Ross Birrell, Una McGlone and I, we have disseminated research outputs, like an article *Frontiers in Psychology*, a keynote lecture *Audio Engineering Society*, an Oxford University Press published book (from these authors who co-wrote without being in the same room for 4 years!) and festival commissions across Miami, Japan, Australia and many more. 3 mins 47.

the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra weekly sessions surpassed our expectations, as the progressive textures and conversational gestures of improvised music are not so plagued by latency issues as pop/rock music genres are. We were pleasantly surprised that we could have a genuine sense of flow, as performers were open and curious about each other's gestures – trying to identify the source of each sound, actively searching for cues to respond to.

From the outset were also in wonder about the political and psychological implications of this seemingly magic solution to our profound fears of indeterminate isolation. We gradually became aware of changing social dynamics, such as increased accessibility as we were able to instantaneously drop in to the session at the click of a weblink. Thus we could fitting creativity around or even during our domestic responsibilities. At times it felt like we were erasing the enforced physical distance between us.

Some of the changing musical performance dynamics included:

- In the CCA theatre space we could hear a blend of instruments' sound waves swirling around the acoustic space; over zoom, we might have two or three instruments nearly solo-d due to fast internet or high quality microphones.
- In the CCA Theatre space we could focus on our own instrument, but see in our peripheral vision another performer raising their instrument to play; over zoom we see a head and shoulders image, and the musical instrument might actually be out of shot.
- In the CCA theatre space, we needed to plan technical support in advance to set up a projector for live visuals or print out a graphic score for our colleagues; over zoom, a performer could spontaneously layer in graphic filters, that blend with their performer image.
- In the CCA theatre space there might be a performer in centre stage, and the percussionist at the rear of the stage, or performers arranged in a curve, where each performer hear the players either side of you the clearest; over zoom, we flattened the curve, as all performers are an equal size and the same distance, 2-3 feet away on a computer screen. The sound is direct to your headphones.

When playing again in person for the first time in two years, in a small rehearsal I was profoundly moved to be able to hug my Raymond, Gerry, Maria and Paul, as we geeked over our new instruments as if we were children returning back to school after a long summer holiday. I was nearly brought to tears when we began to play and the sounds from Raymond's saxophone, Maria's mediated voice emerging from multiple speakers, Paul's trombone and Gerry's collection of synths and percussive toys literally vibrated through my body. No longer just in headphones. It felt visceral and intimate, and I realised what was lost (over zoom).

However, the ZOOM sessions allowed me to live and breathe improvisation, performing much more frequently than pre-COVID, becoming a part of seminal performers lives (including Maggie Nichols, Steve Beresford and John Russell), sipping wine with them in their living room, or sharing stories around the cooking stove. We became each others social and creative lifelines – especially for those who were shielding due to physical vulnerability.

In the CCA theatre space, behind the scenes chatter would emerge organically in small groups in between pieces; on zoom the entire group became captivated as a whole to hear Maggie, Steve and John’s tales from their decades’ long careers.

We shared joy at new arrivals

- Emma and Paul’s Charlie
- Ken’s granddaughter, Nadia
- Allan’s son, Pippin

Shared grief of our heartbreaking loss. Together we celebrated the life of prolific experimental guitarist John Russell, who many of us never met in person, but he mentored us all every week on ZOOM for nearly a year, before he sadly passed away in the winter of 2020. 7min35

Maria Sappho, called these “in between” or behind the scenes chatter “Oral Histories” and I agree. Everyone was putting forward things they wanted to be kept, preserved – sometimes stories, sometime objects, or precious moments like presenting new babies to the screen, like Mufasa holding Simba over Pride Rock in The Lion King. Maria is fascinated in how communities self mythologize – and the weekly GIOSessions seemed to intensify this process of self-mythologising. It intensified, accelerated and proliferated – as you can imagine this ever -expanding archive is profoundly unwieldy – as we record a full 2 hours a week for coming up to 5 years this becomes 520 hours. However, the first three months had 2 sessions a week, so that’s another 24 hours, which brings the total to 544 hours. Bear in mind there were often multiple recording perspectives, and individual stems/stream of sound per musician. that multiplies it all. And each week it grows. 8min35

What is particularly profound is this sense of fast-forwarded closeness, with people I have never met from the other side of the world – although we might not all have time to tell a story each week, even those who have not spoken aloud are NO less present – in fact they are sometimes the most visibly engaged with the conversation, smiling, laughing and reacting.

Technology – SOUND

It was really important to us from the beginning that we made the sessions as easy to join as possible. So a performer could join within seconds, by clicking on a regular mailout zoom link sent a minute before the session. Technical setups range from low fi to hi-fi / casual to recording studio set up.

Although I distinguish these approaches as low fi and hi fi, in reality there is no perceived hierarchy of one sound being better than the other – in fact mobile device dial-ins were often remarkable contributions, and brought about a hybrid way of being, a “performing-and” mode, in a similar manner to the “listen-and-walk” mode of The Walkman Effect (Hosokawa 1984), when mobile playback technologies became commonplace. This multitasking meant that performers would incorporate immovable commitments into the session – at times the novel experience would be spotlighted as a graphic score, for example:

- Thomas Rohrer’s stunning rush through vistas of snow-capped mountains in the Swiss alps
- or Raymond MacDonald’s still, contemplative broadcast of a sunset in Tuscany.

For a zoom room of musicians who had been locked in one location for months on end, we joked that we were being taken on holiday! But beyond the jokes, there was something very new and unique about this spontaneous musical response to another’s sensory experiences of much-longed for travel. 10min14

Technical tips for music on zoom, include turning Original sound “on”, and ensuring a level check for new participants.

Technology - VIDEO

Fascinatingly, some performers “remix” their visuals in realtime, along the lines of Scratch Video pioneers, George Barber, Dara Birnbaum and Nick Hope. Canadian audio-visual alchemists Laura Kavanaugh and Ian Birse of “Instant Places”, Raymond MacDonald and Maria Sappho in the UK, and Usui Yasuhiro and Yasuko Kaneko are heralded by the group for their hypnotic, otherworldly transformations using live filter software such as Cam Twist, Snap Cam, or bespoke interactive platforms built with computer code.

Maria morphs in and out of her films like a balletic cuttlefish;

Raymond animates paintings using exaggerated facial expressions or seated choreography of his limbs;

Yasuhiro builds kaleidoscopes of colour around a fisheye wormhole of flurescent flowers;

Neko seeks out acoustically fascinating sites such as a reverberant tunnel, or a historic building facing demolition and layers up her studio self with that explorer self;

Laura and Iain’s domestic environment seems to have 3D projection mapped images wrapped around the walls. 11min24.

In GIO Zoom telematic performance, Maria is like a chameleon – or a cuttlefish. Subverting the live – sampling herself.

■ “Some of the cephalopods have a marvelous organ called the Chromatophore, that is essentially a display built into their skin. They can create luminous, quickly changing, colorful images all over their bodies. It is absolutely enthralling to watch them flash each other, seemingly communicating in a visual language....

■ ...People have to use their hands to craft images, so there is an imbalance between our ability to see and our ability to visually create. Not so for some of the squid, octopi, and most especially the charming cuttlefish. These creatures are also stunningly smart. They should serve to excite fantasies of truly alien intelligence on Earth...”

– Jaron Lanier, VR Pioneer “The Purpose of Virtual Reality is to turn humans into cephalopods” <http://www.jaronlanier.com/squid.html>

Megan hello, I was wondering with the visual aspect of zoom, if I don't know if everyone, how everyone has their view set, I know you can, like, watch have your view set so that you can see everybody. But you know how you can also, just, like, if you're making sound you just see yourself. And I wonder if that sort of influenced the way people interacted with each other, like, if you could see yourself more, really, in a wee bit, because, you know, like I would just wonder how much that may have influenced the sort of you know, the wrong try to say, the you know, whose voice comes in, when and if you're **whether intentionally or not, taking up more space**, more, sorry, more space than other.

mARIA

I think something that working telematically has taught me, and also, I guess, being someone who grew up in the digital age is that there is this wonderful space in which we might reinvent ourselves and question, what is the identity that we're presenting to the world? What are other people seeing? Because we can see it in real time, and we can also augment that and utilize the wonders of a digital world to create a fantasy that oftentimes is not possible for us in this physical world. So for me, it's a very empowering space where one can try on other identities, where one can subvert identities that are often perceived of us. So that, to me, is what the visual aspect meant. I don't know if it maybe made me play less, or if that was the question, but maybe it made me more obsessed with thinking about myself and my identity. 13min27. **(PLAY HER SOUND)**

Forerunners to Hybrid Piece (2024) Foutraque (2021) and Concerto for Virtualities and Orchestra (2022)

Before 2020, GIO had never in its 18 years held a “virtual” festival, but in 2020 we knew we did not want to just “sit this one out” because we could not gather in the Centre for Contemporary Arts. We recruited a talented team from Tusk to produce, host and exhibit (live) GIOFest XIII, “Flattening the Curve.”

In GIOFest XIV and GIOFest XV, we commissioned Maria Sappho and the NoiseBringers and then Maria Sappho to devise Hybrid Piece works:

Foutraque

Concerto for Virtualities and Orchestra

These were dense, political, and ambitious works devising interplay between the ZOOM orchestra and the ROOM orchestra along with augmented reality, a time-directed social score and then a conductor to harmonise the voices from human and more-than human entities – ZOOM orchestra, ROOM orchestra, mushrooms and Chimere, the Artificial Intelligence being.

Transpecies Concerto

This concerto commissioned by the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra. Maria wrote the concerto to include elements of improvisational conduction, while also including three transpecies soloists including Yasuko Kaneko (trombone), Mushrooms, and Chimere (AI). The orchestra including a live band of players of the Glasgow Improvising Orchestra and the Australian Art Orchestra, including indigenous musicians Daniel and David Wilfred whom Maria has previous worked with on residency in Tasmania. 15min

(For GIOFest XIV “Reconnections and New Directions”, we were delighted to be allowed back into our beloved live venue, the Centre for Contemporary Arts. However we did not want to leave all that we learned from our online festival behind – nor our international guests who we had become accustomed to seeing every week for the last year and a half!

Therefore we established a hybrid festival format with:

- A live in-person orchestra, performing concerts to the in-person theatre audience;
- A ZOOM orchestra, with each player performing from their “Theatre of the Home”, broadcast into the CCA Theatre space too;
- And all of the above live-streamed into remote audience’s homes.

Again, the acousmatic voice-over compere was there to guide the remote at-home audience through the festival, to bridge the distance from the theatre to the home.

The key hybrid event was commissioned for the Noisebringers. The Noisebringers are a fascinating art collective, comprised of Maria Sappho, Henry MacPherson and Brice Catherin – working across eclectic mediums, from salon-like art exhibitions in international galleries displaying woven tapestries of human anatomy, intricate maps of their mythological universe, novel and of course telematic performance.

The Noisebringers’ welcomed the GIOSessions Tuesday rehearsal ZOOM into their residency in Geneva, where the ZOOM performers played back over a video projection and a PA loudspeaker system to a small audience in the gallery space – importantly Raymond MacDonald and the Noisebringers also played their instruments live to the audience in the gallery, and broadcast it out to the zoom room and live streamed it on YouTube for audience members across the world. We were so excited at this Hybrid mode of performance, that GIO asked the Noisebringers to stage a large scale hybrid event using the hi-tech facilities in the Centre for Contemporary Art’s Theatre Space. Maria shared that the event in Geneva invented the practice for them, they knew they could do it – almost a proof of concept.

The key differences were that there were only a few audience members in the gallery space – which in itself is a very different socio-cultural venue, the context of an art exhibition. The livestream was just a drop in in the usual Tuesday night exploratory space. It was if we were just letting a few people into our usual meetup.

However, the Friday night of the Creative Scotland funded GIOFest XIV, advertised as a theatrical event with the expectations of perfection, high quality audio engineering and cinema screen projection, with a MUCH MORE expansive technical specification (and signal flow diagram). Simply put, there were also many more performing bodies in the live space, each with their instrument miked up for the PA or sent through a Direct Input. How on earth did they adapt to this scale! How on earth did they avoid feedback??

(Allegedly it was actually a very simple solution – all ZOOM orchestra performers had to wear headphones. I still cannot quite fathom how this single intervention negated the PA loudspeakers blasting the ZOOM orchestra in close proximity to the ROOM orchestra’s summed multiple microphone master feed to ZOOM. In actuality we imagine that the inexhaustible Keir, Jim and

the CCA Tech team were closely monitoring the fluctuating dynamics and had carefully selected highly directional microphones.

Foutraque (eccentric)

Crucial to making this work comprehensible to an audience, was a score where the Noisebringers could thin and thicken out the two orchestras. Inherent to the Noisebringers work is a light touch satire, a scrutiny of politics and issues around accessibility and equality in music and art.

Fatroque was a social score. The score was not populated by musical notes on a staff, in different lines for the cellos, guitars, percussion. Rather the score was a timeline of groups – those who could drive, those who had not been on a plane in the last 2 years, immigrants, mothers – if a player did not belong in that group, they had to wait to play, resting, or remaining silent, listening to the solo-d group.

Mothers in the orchestra are at times drawn away from the performing for care responsibilities, so this was a time to celebrate them by foregrounding their voices. It was an intentional thinning out of the majority voices in the orchestra. By enforcing that for a moment only mothers can play, this resulted in only a couple of women singing in the room and on ZOOM. The gap that was left acts almost as a commemorative, or monumental silence, a giving of space, but also as a prompt to make us think about how we might pro-actively include more mothers in improvisation, music and the art world in general.

(This seemed to have an influence from the prolific work of Feminist Improvising Group, Maggie Nicols and the increased participation from mothers, parents and their children in the GIO ZOOM rehearsals).

Remember the signal flow diagram I mentioned? Whilst this included audio signals and audio visual inputs and outputs, what was really prioritised in this diagram was an “extended reality of needs” – so as well as a signal path, Maria identified NEEDS PATHS. What does a ZOOM orchestra performer need to see? The gestures of the ZOOM virtual orchestra and the physical orchestra. Similarly the physical orchestra (or room orchestra) needs to see the ZOOM performers gestures and video filters, and hear their sounds blasted over the PA. This setup felt quite uncanny, as I could see Hope Young on the ZOOM screen in front of me, that she was in singing in Austin, Texas but I could hear her voice emerge from the speaker behind me. Several times I instinctively turned around almost expecting to see her behind me!

Maria became more than a musical, dance and video performer in this work – by wearing a “Britney Mic” she actually became the mediator between the ROOM orchestra and the ZOOM orchestra. She said she felt “really responsible for everyone in the digital realm”, aware of their vulnerability of not being able to move around or explore the space beyond a few static video feeds and a summed audio master, or see the any of the audiences. The stress of facilitating this work is nearly unimaginable, but thankfully Maria has an entire PhD study, *The Improvisers Cookbook*, to plot out and analyse the artistic, political and audio engineering ramifications of this ground-breaking Hybrid Performance practice.

A fundamental rule for this work: the “digital bodies are equally as important as the physical bodies”.

As if this set up was not complex enough, the NoiseBringers and GIO also commissioned Rachel Weiss, based in Miami Florida, to develop an augmented reality software, playing up the notion of beaming in a “virtual conductor.” This was experienced through a moving smartphone screen, which displayed a disembodied 3D modelled hands imposed upon the real CCA space, and floating text graphic prompts. The noisebringers choreographed a conjoined dance to move around this Augmented reality and beam it to the ZOOM orchestra. The ROOM orchestra were mesmerised by the unfurling of these entangled performers.

VT: highlights of Friday Night <https://youtu.be/ic-9hdy5nfk> 5 mins long

Composing a Hybrid Piece

last piece I composed for 2022's GIOFest XV was Folding Space/Folding Time – which was a vehicle to share auto-ethnographic diaristic poetry to communicate the experience of distance and immersion in a rural country in the Tasmanian Highlands – of forming a community with Australian Art Orchestra that twinned/mirrored my own in Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra. The work itself consisted of:

- a densely time-stamped text score for the ROOM orchestra
- a spotlit duet
- a theremin solo played by two performers, with visually transmitted performance gestures from across the room
- sections of my pre-recorded voiceover and archival film and animations periodically lit up the screen.
- Key to this piece was a lighting design to simulate an orchestra that played “sleep” and an orchestra that played “awake”.

For Hybrid Piece I wanted to play with the idea that a score could be merely a container to make room for the performers compositional choices.

Akin to the idea that an mP3 is a container to compress audio, claiming to delete the sounds that humans could not perceive anyway – a container that listens for us. (According to Jonathan Sterne and Ryan McGuire this does actually fundamentally alter the way the music sounds – due to the limited white-centric songs chosen to calibrate this tool.)

One of the strengths of GIO Global is that we have a formula/structure that eases our creativity: catch up about our lives/music/the world, 20 minutes FREE piece, spontaneously arising themes/prompts/words/ideas/textures, small groups, sometimes duets. I wanted to create a model of this, within a 20 minute stage hybrid piece, with 3 discrete movements. 17minutes

ZOOM can be a tense environment with latency, connection dropouts, cameras-off contributing to awkward, stilted and effortful interactions, easily fraught with miscommunication. To avoid ZOOM tumbleweeds, anxiety or frustration, we instigated a flexible but reliable structure which is still consistent 2 years later.

Free

We begin with a free improvisation piece first after which unfolds for 20 minutes, allowing us to calibrate to the gestures, instruments and voices in the room that evening.

Themes

We ask around for ideas or themes, often a single word or a phrase would be the prompt, like a compressed form of the Fluxus text scores from Yoko Ono (such as Lighting Piece, where she prompts you to light a match and watch until it goes out). Often these prompts may arise out of observations of organically occurring gestures (such as the Food improvisation inspired by Maggie's performing-and-cooking multi-tasking; or the Colour improvisation, designed to encourage playing up to the camera, drawing graphic scores with pen and paper or a graphic score of flamboyant make up on a performers' face. Sometimes we would play a memorial to engage in collective grief (several sessions were sombre dedications to our beloved John Russell), or responses to world events.

Conduction

Partly as an experiment on latency and synchronisation, partly as an uncanny homage of the disembodied hand character "Thing" from the Addams Family, we sometimes play in response to Raymond MacDonalds hand. Rather than establish an overt code or language we gradually agreed that a closed fist = stop, and an open hand = play, beyond that it was subject to interpretation.

Small Groups

As ZOOM is a software designed for corporate video-conferencing, it sometimes acts as a brutal conductor! Dimming performers whose signal is weaker (wifi or audio) and prioritizing the most "voicelike" gestures. Therefore, a fairer sharing of the audio spotlight is enabled when we break up the session into small groups, one after the other. The performers who are "offstage", so to speak become the audience. This results in a focused audio-visual conversation between 2-4 performers, where nearly all voices can emerge in the mix more equally. Organic chance formations of groups emerge,

“I won’t play” – zoom/room mediator

My compositional decision to “not play” was an enactment of the responsibility and load of making space for others to play.

It was also to ensure precision and clarity

The act of me announcing the movements I, II, and III mirrored my role as recordist in the ZOOM sessions to record “the clap” akin to the “slate” on a movie shoot.

The work was less about me, and my performance “virtuosities” but rather my voice signalled the boundaries of the timestamp as a framing/structuring device.

My voice was a sounding of the table line boundaries on the written score. My voice was the marker, the container, the “get set, go” that the affordances of zoom technology requires.

It was a reference to the ironic prompt I give to those beginning improvisation, that there can be less inhibition and a feeling of freedom (from judgement, but also a sense of ability to act without performance anxiety) that can be granted to “play” within a framework of prompts. For beginner students I ask them to bring a noisemaking object and I hold up text prompts, such as “quiet sounds”, and “tell them what to do”

A 20 minute free improvisation Hybrid Piece might ironically feel like there was less freedom – because the orchestra may not be able to listen to each other’s distinct grains (of ZOOM filtering, versus ROOM acoustics reverberance) – to calibrate to eachother, and to be guided along parsing and building. 18min 40

MOVEMENT I. LISTEN and RESPOND

Lighting as conductor

ZOOM /ROOM switch

I was tasked with opening GIOFestXVI with the Hybrid Piece. I thought it would be contrary to have the first 8 minutes of the piece with the ZOOM orchestra THEN the ROOM orchestra – stratified, separate – not ALL AT ONCE. (one after the other)

I chose the ZOOM orchestra to appear first due to the inherently cinematic nature.

I wanted the audience's attention to tightly focused, and to hear the digital grain and idiosyncrasies of each players ROOM tones. The ZOOM orchestra are solo'd.

It reminds me of the baseline calibration that takes place in sound and neuroscience research, to have variables across conditions – in my phd I recorded the respiration , Galvanic Skin Response and pulse rate of participants as they listened to 30 seconds of silence, before and after the 15 minute ambisonic soundscape)

I wanted the piece to emerge out of pitch black, emulating the womb-like darkness of cinema apparatus (Baudry, 1975) Baudry and Kerins (2010) write that when an audience watches a succession of moving images with a mixed synchronous soundtrack in a dark space, it encourages a regression to an infantile state, where the pre-frontal cortex is dimmed, dampened as when we were babies – essentially we are given a focused data stream, so our brain does not have to scan around an array of competing stimuli. Also referenced is Samuel Beckett's Not I where the actor's mouth is the only mise-en-scene that is lit and the audience has an uncomfortable even hallucinatory experience due to the sensory deprivation – where they even shut off the fire exit lights!

The only camera on the zoom call originally is from a laptop in the CCA, pointing to a stage light that was shut off to start the piece.

This signalled the ZOOM orchestra to activate their cameras, and unmute their microphones one by one.

I ANNOUNCE down the microphone that feeds into the ZOOM orchestra, and projects throughout the ROOM to ROOM orchestra and AUDIENCE *“MOVEMENT I: LISTEN– does the dark focus your attention? Does it allow us to listen more deeply?”*

The ROOM orchestra becomes one with, or fused with the ROOM Audience.

I then announce *“MOVEMENT I: RESPOND”*

The zoom orchestra switch off their cameras and the stage lights burst into full brightness – and full spectrum of instruments.

ROOM ORCHESTRA THEN APPEARING

With a shock of bright (to emphasise contrast of domestic performance to a camera versus the bright lights of a public stage).

The ROOM orchestra are given one word “RESPOND” – this makes it overt that the ROOM orchestra are replying to the 4 minutes of ZOOM orchestra they have just heard through the

theatre PA. Perhaps mimicking acoustic timbres, perhaps mirroring physical gestures seen on screen.

The ZOOM orchestra listen to the multi-mic-ed ROOM orchestra, but see no visual trace of the ROOM orchestra – just the laptop camera pointing on the light at full brightness. 22min05

MOVEMENT II. DUET

Subverting ZOOM as teleconferencing tool Duet for matriarchal voices

I announce “MOVEMENT 3: Duet” and press “camera on” on the zoom laptop sitting at Maggie Nichols.

I wanted to thank Maggie for her central contributions as she shaped the first years of the Global ZOOM orchestra, and the catalysing role that voice and words have in the ZOOM Orchestra sessions – Constance Cooper, as if in a relay with Maggie, joined our group in the years that Maggie stepped back.

On ZOOM we ask around for ideas or themes, often a single word or a phrase would be the prompt, like a compressed form of the Fluxus text scores from Yoko Ono (such as Lighting Piece, where she prompts you to light a match and watch until it goes out). Often these prompts may arise out of observations of organically occurring gestures (such as the Food improvisation inspired by Maggie’s performing-and-cooking multi-tasking).

This section literally shone a light / spotlight my role models for creativity and care that transcends categorisation (and time/space barriers) - I am so lucky to have made music/dance/text with these talented women who never fail to make me laugh, cry or and think deeply about our relationships with each other and care for humans and more-than-humans x (watch this space for a GIO Global film from Constance, “a piece to entice birds” (who had not returned to her stoop in Washington heights, NYC).

I was honored to have Dr. Maggie Nichols (profoundly influential vocal improviser and founder of the Feminist Improvising Group and The Gathering (https://www.discogs.com/artist/239931-Maggie-Nichols?srsltid=AfmBOooDusFts628-DpKkSsISdYmsjuzrvz9BSmd_IPELoTAQQcfltJa) and Constance Cooper (actor and experimental composer in New York <https://constance-cooper.com>) agree to play in this profoundly vulnerable multi-dimensional centre-stages-together at once. 24min04

(I wanted to overtly confront the notion that we are subverting ZOOM – a teleconferencing tool that was originally built to keep employees working when companies shut down – capitalist, business infrastructure that sprung into popularity virtually overnight and enabled a semblance of “business as usual” (literally) when we were suffering multiple global pandemics.

ZOOM was built for one business man to listen and respond to another business man (she says with a hint of irony), one after the other – or at times a delay causing clashes – suddenly an artificial intelligence transcript could quantify the timescales of each voice’s dominance , and it emerged that the millisecond delay wreaks havoc with users with anxiety or neurodivergence and the vulnerability of talking whilst seeing yourself on screen (and your domestic, formerly private) space) highlighted the societal inequalities around digital inclusion/digital poverty.

Duets are unique situation – for the players:

Where the each player can hear themselves fully and hear their virtual collaborator fully – without ZOOM drop out, shuffling/reprioritising of the most voice-like sound with the fastest internet speed and the most sensitive microphone.

Whereas the listeners (on zoom live, or of the exported recording) actually hear a splicing together of how zoom sees fit to slot the voices together, cutting forms and frequencies as to puzzle pieces.) 25min37.

**MOVEMENT III:
FREE IMPROVISATION with LIGHT CRESCENDO
Lighting as conductor**

I announce "MOVEMENT III: FREE IMPROVISATION WITH LIGHT CRESCENDO"

The score instructs:

CCA Theatre Stage lights from low to mid to FULL BRIGHTNESS (the brighter the light the louder the sound).

All ZOOM orchestra can appear on screen for whole duration (so we see them listening/and or playing)

For the last 7 minutes the ZOOM orchestra + the ROOM orchestra play free

(all zoom players + all room players whenever they wish).

When you ask the zoom orchestra and the room orchestra to crescendo over 7 minutes across continents.... It felt as loud as the competing roars in a football stadium) 26min17sec.

Planning a Hybrid Piece and Global Film Screening

The planning of the Hybrid Piece required advance commitment to the performance, and even commissioning an advance technical run-through with our audio engineer Keir Long who went above and beyond to ensure that the ZOOM orchestra and the ROOM orchestra and I felt confident that we would not have uncontrollable feedback or internet connection issues in what can be a high-pressure nerves of the live audience waiting outside the door!

I needed to be confident there would be a ZOOM orchestra available on call for several hours on the performance day, with patience and following instructions to ensure the sections/boundaries/containers and movements were conceptually clear to the audience.

Google form sign ups allowed the participants to keep track of the multiple ZOOM events occurring between 12th and 28th November, outwith the usual automatic routine, and mailouts to the 170 strong mailing list needed to be clear with zoom links on the day. 27min18

Scoping the tech

We needed the ROOM orchestra to see the ZOOM orchestra – so a big TV facing the orchestra. Documentation shows that even players at the projection screen often peered up above them, implying that the ZOOM orchestra had this looming, almost corporeal pronounced presence from the cinema screen.

We connected all the ROOM orchestra spot-microphones into a mixing console, along with a compere/composer/conductor SHURE microphone that was prioritised to cut through all other ROOM orchestra microphone signal. These were all sent to the ZOOM orchestra, and through the PA to the ROOM audience. (The BBC also recorded the entire session for a broadcast on Radio 3 3 New Music Show.

ZOOM orchestra audio was played back over an elevated PA, and in floor monitors for the ROOM orchestra.

We needed several laptops to run this event:

- one to run audio to ZOOM and from Zoom to ROOM;
- one to beam the ZOOM session to the projector THEATRE SCREEN
- one to beam the ZOOM session to the TV for the ROOM ORCHESTRA
- one to capture and transmit the image of the STAGE LIGHT - off, on, or in a gradual lighting crescendo) to the ZOOM (and therefore to the Theatre SCREEN)
- one to capture the visual of Maggie in a spotlight – specifically for Constance to duet with.

One laptop was running a cinema screening in another room, and the zoom audience for this too. It remained connected and hosting for the rest of the night where Constance, Fara, Steve and Douglas played and partied together from Minneapolis, New York, London and Cambridge, disconnected from the Concert Theatre. 28min52sec.

GIOFest XVI - Global Film Screening

This was comprised of original dance, film and sculpture created for a Global Telematic orchestra to respond to live, Glasgow Improvisers Orchesra GLOBAL. Immediately preceding the Hybrid Piece concert, a screening of new films produced by and featuring many Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's digital global collaborations over the past 12 months included dance and theatre from Japan, sonic ethnography from Australian sound artists, and the spontaneous generation of ideas other global players from Mexico, Spain, New York, California among many others!

Behind, Minori Seki

Origami, Yasuko Kaneko

Sensory Ethnography, C 29min39.

(write up)

GIOFest XVI - Mainstage Films

S L O W

Passport

Lines on the Floor

To ensure audiences across all three nights of the festival accessed the GIO Global Orchestra work, we opened the second half of each concert with a 5 minute extract from a carefully selected “spontaneously arising” GIO Global film.

S L O W was played as a pre-lude to Maggie Nichols’ drone based Pibroch for Palestine, including Refaat Alareer’s powerful poem “If I must die” staged on the National Day of Action. (pibroch – theme/ground/variations for pipes)

Passport was screened on the night that Surbhi Mittal’s voice boomed through the PA to introduce her Unbound watercolour score – Passport was an homage to the international collaboration of the Delhi Improvisers Orchestra (founded by Raymond 2024), and Douglas Ewart’s Concentric was conducted with George E Lewis as conduit for his ideas in absentia

Lines on the Floor, a graphic score of dancers shoes dragging a residue on a white floor, was screened before the “Small Groups” sessions on the last night, to emulate the shifting formations and constellations (striking and moving ensembles throughout the stage) (and the movement workshops for GIObabies and GioDynamics) 31mins

Making sense of the ever-expanding archive – compressing one year into one hour

This still from Loki, Season 2 a Marvel Universe Disney+ series, features stunning, groundbreaking visual effects to simulate Loki quivering in fear at spaghettification due to the overload of the “temporal loom” a result of infinitely expanding “branching timelines” of the Orwellian Time Variance Authority

This is what I felt like when I was tasked with devising a one hour cinema showreel that would *celebrate* (within the community), and *showcase* outwith the community - the immense level of intimacy creativity in the GIO Global Sessionsintegrated, or “bound” within our everyday (or, more accurately our “every-week”). 32min08sec

Conclusion

I have given you a backstage access / a peek behind the curtain of the Hybrid Piece for ZOOM Orchestra and ROOM Orchestra

Composing a piece that at first seemed mere stage directions –

“You play – whatever you want”

now “you play – in response”

“pre-selected duet” –

“now all of you play – whatever you want, as long as you are crescendoing with the light”

I wanted to place the ZOOM orchestra, first on, centre stage – all eyes and ears on them – then ask the ROOM orchestra to honour their launch of the festival as if an answer to their question. A Yes, and...

I needed to spotlight key matriarchal voices in a duet.

And then push the ZOOM Orchestra and ROOM orchestra to “play together” in a shared task - knowing the ROOM orchestra was bathed in the crescendo of light brightness – and knowing the ZOOM orchestra merely saw the stage light as a beam standing in for a face on their computer screen.

So, film is a structuring role within our spontaneous music – the quest to produce an unweildily expanding archive is MOTIVATED by the spotlight – the staging in our physical festival with a theatre audience.

By setting a regular space (that space - actually being time! 2 hours every Tuesday) for our Global Orchestra to perform to camera – in “Diverse Spaces and Places” – means that we frame, prioritise our everyday.

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra have a fluid and multi-dimensional (perhaps even quantum or multi-versal) approach to filming improvisation and improvising with film.

Film can be a structuring role within the music, or film can explode and implode where and when that music is *situated* - essentially a band can play *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once* – using telematic *digital* video-conferencing technology and/or the *physical* theatre apparatus – sometimes ALL AT ONCE.

HYBRID PIECE GIOFEST XVI

Jessica Argo, 27th November 2024

Theme	Time	Who is playing	Lighting/Stage Direction
MOVEMENT I. LISTEN and RESPOND			
<p>LISTEN and RESPOND</p> <p>CCA ROOM ORCHESTRA LISTENS first and then RESPONDS.</p> <p>ROOM ORCHESTRA LISTENING in the dark – does the dark focus your attention? Does it allow us to listen more deeply?</p>	7:30pm-7:35pm	ZOOM orchestra + Jessica play for 5 mins	<p>CCA Theatre plunged in DARKNESS / except projector</p> <p>ZOOM is on Projection Screen</p>
	7:35pm-7:40pm	ROOM orchestra play for 4 minutes	<p><i>CCA Theatre Stage lights ON BRIGHT</i></p> <p><i>ZOOM Orchestra turn cameras off</i></p>
MOVEMENT II. DUET			
ZOOM + ROOM – duet (voices?)	7:40-7:43pm	<p>one ZOOM player + one ROOM player</p> <p><i>(zoom is teleconferencing so two voices – Maggie and Constance)</i></p>	<p><i>CCA Theatre Spotlight on Maggie (ROOM player)</i></p> <p><i>One ZOOM player is on Projection Screen (Constance)</i></p> <p><i>(all other zoomers camera off)</i></p> <p><i>ZOOM Camera face Maggie</i></p>

MOVMENT III: FREE IMPROVISATION with LIGHT CRESCENDO			
FREE IMPROVISING with LIGHT CRESCENDO	7:43pm- 7:50pm	ZOOM + ROOM play free (all zoom players + all room players whenever they wish)	<i>CCA Theatre Stage lights from low to mid to FULL BRIGHTNESS (the brighter the light the louder the sound).</i> All ZOOM orchestra can appear on screen for whole duration (so we see them listening/and or playing)
(ALTERNATIVE) MOVEMENT III: TEXT			
TEXT SCORE: S l o w sounds FAST sounds L L O O O O N N N G G G G sounds Short sounds Quiet sounds LOUD sounds	7:43pm- 7:50pm	ZOOM + ROOM play when given prompts (all zoom players + all room players)	<i>CCA Theatre Stage lights ON MID-BRIGHT</i> <i>Jessica hands text prompt sheets to ROOM players one at a time (“slow...loud” sounds)</i> <i>ZOOM orchestra is given a SCREEN SHARE of a text prompt “slow...loud” sounds.</i>

HYBRID PIECE GIOFEST 2024 – ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS

ZOOM/ROOM

Free improvisation

PICK A THEME FROM A GIO GLOBAL ZOOM SESSION

a domestic performance, spontaneously arising – turn into a public theatre performance. Free improvise 20 minutes with one of those themes in mind? e.g.

- FAR AWAY
- BLACK HOLE
- SPACE BETWEEN OBJECTS/ ROTATE
- LATHER RINSE LABYRINTH
- IS FEEDBACK A KIND OF SHADOW?
- LIPSYNC
- PIECE AND JAM
- Copper Pheasant - when a copper pheasant cries out for its mate it can be consoled by holding a mirror! is it "moving?" is it "grotesque"
- can we make a piece full of contrasts
- when is a mirror not a mirror
- not simple loud soft / or fast slow - but go as far as can go

NOISE FLOOR

silent at start, use Mnemosyne machine to build and amplify this silence / solo in room / then solo in zoom.

POST IT SCORES from New String Collective?

WHAT IS LOST

proposal – zoom orchestra record themselves on voice memos etc whilst playing then send upload those sounds to a padlet I make to play back “their room sound” in our room” so we can deduce what is lost (complicated...!!!)

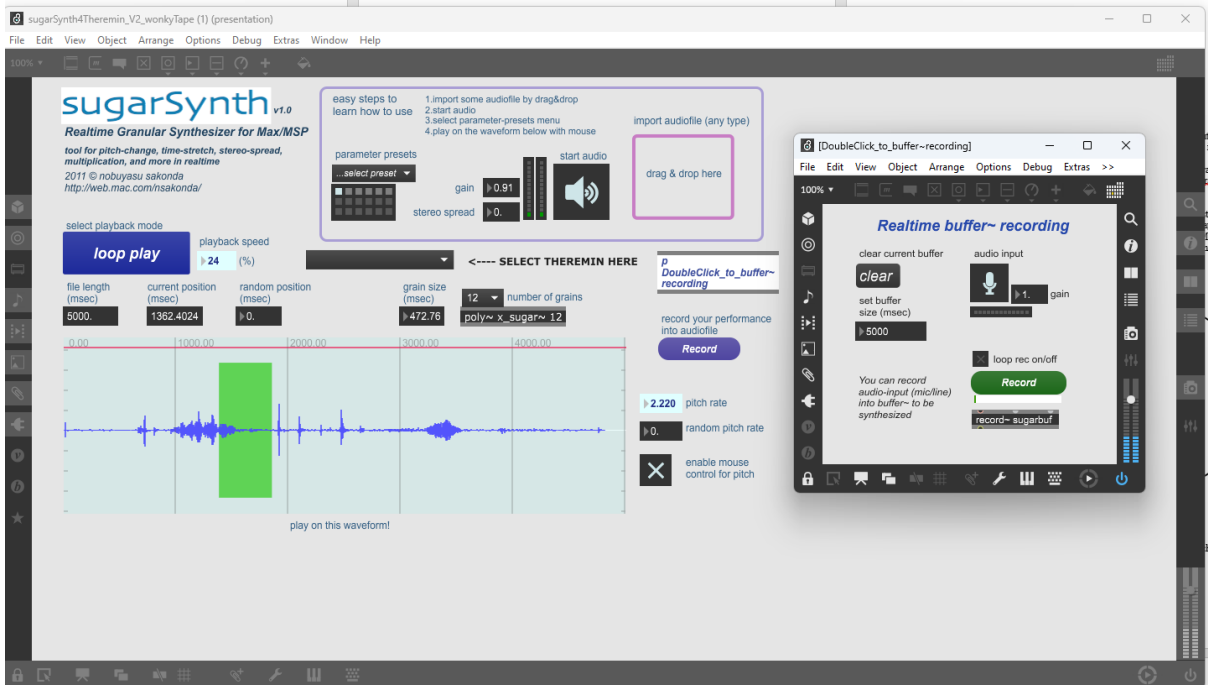
TEXT SCORE

by itself for whole 20 minutes?

DECONSTRUCTED DUETS

Jess take the zoom laptop to place in front of selected players (select in advance and design spotlights accordingly)
(long hdmi needed)_

MNEMOSYNE MACHINE – re: Alvin Lucier I am sitting in a Room recording and re-recording live sound samples sound emerging from the Bluetooth speaker – theremin used as a controller to sample and transforming the orchestra Room sound (5 seconds samples scrubbing and stretching/pitch shifting) and play back to zoom orchestra? (complicated....
!!!! and feedback potential)

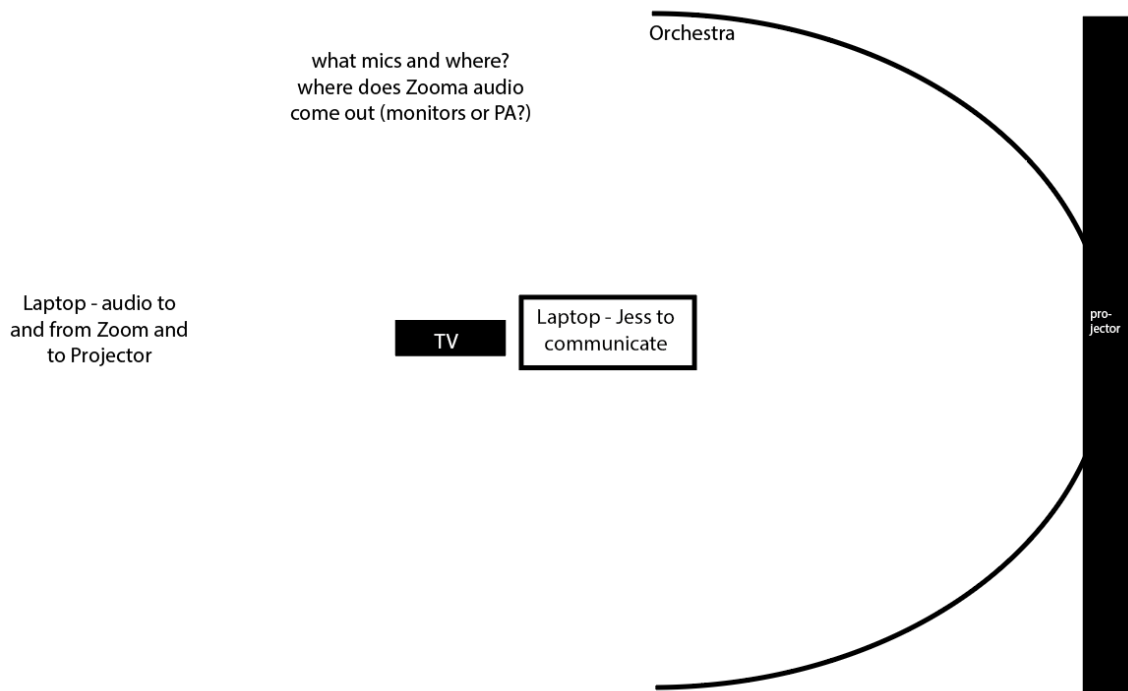


TECH SET UP NOTES

These were the most recent notes for the Tech Set up for the Hybrid Piece , but we are doing a practice run on wednesday after which I can provide you with more detailed information

We think we will have the "zoom orchestra" sounds playing back over an elevated PA, facing out towards the audience, rather than in floor monitors near the "room orchestra"'s microphones.

I will ask our technicians if possible to record both ZOOM and ROOM orchestra from the desk, although a stereo recording for yourself from the space might actually capture the distinction between the zoom orchestra PA mediated sound, versus the ROOM orchestra - which might convey the concept of this hybrid piece to the listeners at home more effectively.



4pm - 6pm Thu 28th Nov - CCA Theatre - All tech team - Tech Set Up for Hybrid Piece and check short film playback

major focus = monitors/PA playing Zoom audio in space not feeding back

*Windows Lenovo Think Book intel core i7 being used for Zoom audio/visual

1 laptop for audio to and from console and projector – upstairs in the technicians mixing room

1x laptop on stage for TV and communication to Zoom)

Other folk on phones for further chat

Running at 7:30pm on Thu 28th Nov (for 15-20 minutes)

HYBRID PIECE GIOFEST 2024

DATES AND TIMES

Name	GIOFest Hybrid Event Technical Test 9pm Glasgow Time On ZOOM Wed 20th November 2024 (for about 10 mins!)	GIOFest Hybrid Set Up at CCA Glasgow/ 4pm-6pm (test time TBC, for 10-30 mins) On ZOOM Thu 28th November 2024	GIOFest Film Screening at CCA Club Room (text chat available on ZOOM room, and playlist published for online watching) 6pm-7pm Thu 28th November 2024	GIOFest Hybrid Concert at CCA Glasgow/on ZOOM 7:30-7:50pm Glasgow Time Thu 28th November 2024
Jessica	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constance Cooper	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yasuko Kaneko				
Rob Burke	Maybe	No	No	Yes
Stefan	?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clare Hall				Yes

Maria Sappho	Yes			
Paul Williamson				
Chris Parfitt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michael Kellett	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Guillermo Torres	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mike Harper	yes	yes	yes	
Vinny Golia		Maybe	maybe	maybe
Baan				yes
Douglas				yes