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JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC, ART AND TECHNOLOGY

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INSAM Journal of Contemporary Music, Art and Technology is an international peer reviewed journal dealing with topical issues in contemporary art music, visual and performing arts, and technology. The journal encourages interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches and innovative views on these subjects, aiming to create a platform for communicating new ideas and theoretical and artistic impulses.
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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The Editorial Board of the *INSAM Journal of Contemporary Music, Art and Technology* decided that both issues of 2022 will be dedicated to one main theme, namely, "Fighting for the attention: Music and art on social media". We can say that this call for papers went very successfully, as we are now presenting to you *INSAM Journal* No. 9. In a year which has seen many grave turbulences on socio-economic and political levels on a global scale, we have once again confirmed the importance of social media for communication and the spreading of news, and we have also seen the limitations of these tools.

In the (Inter)Views section we welcome Kim Diaz Holm, a visual artist who writes about his experience and relation to social media fame, Joe Beedles, an artist who introduces us to his audiovisual laser performance *Additive Duality*, as well as composer and sound artist Svetlana Maraš, who was interviewed by Marija Maglov.

Turning to music and art on social media, our Main Theme section consists of five intriguing papers. The first one, authored by Marcello Messina, Damián Keller, Luzilei Aliel, Carlos Gomez, Marcos Célio Filho and Ivan Simurra, proposes the transition from the concept of the Internet of Musical Things (IoMusT) to the Internet of Musical Stuff (IoMuSt) as a "critique of blockchain and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) as technologies for allotment, disciplination and regimentation of formerly open and freely accessible artistic web content". The next article by Bojana Radovanović is dedicated to an exploration of modes and how TikTok is changing the way we, as musicians, consumers and the industry, make, experience and distribute music. In her paper, Milena Jokanović considers the possibilities and characteristics of virtual and physical spaces for contemporary exhibitions. Sascia Pellegrini writes about the realities of today's fragmentary and distracted consumption of art, which is propelled by the advent of the Internet. In the last article of the section, Isabel Piniella investigates the way in which the artistic project *SPAM (An)Archive* by Óscar Escudero and the collective SoundTrieb resists the environment of digital surveillance.

Two papers found their way to our Beyond the Main Theme section. Here, Miloš Bralović analyzes Lazar Đorđević's double concerto for viola, cello and chamber orchestra, *Pandora*, in light of rethinking the institutionally established models of composition within the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. Fan Jia and Lee Chie Tsang Isaiah discuss the Erhu solo piece *Fireworks* from the perspective of Chuang Tzu's "blurred aesthetics". For the Review section, Aida Adžović writes about the newest edition of the SONEMUS fest held in Sarajevo.

As always, the Editorial team of INSAM Journal is grateful to all the authors, the hard work of contributors as well as the reviewers who shared their knowledge and experience with the goal of improving the final result. Immense gratitude also is due to our proofreaders and language editor, Anthony McLean and, on this occasion, Ivana Medić. With the news of being accepted to the ERIH PLUS index this Autumn, we are more than excited to continue developing this platform as a space for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in science and art in the years to come.

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In Belgrade, December 13, 2022,
Bojana Radovanović,
Editor-in-Chief

</div>

(Inter)Views

Kim Diaz Holm
Norway

FIGHTING FOR SOULS

Nothing comes free.

Social media can be seen as a liberating force for artists, allowing us to get an equal footing with megacorporations and super franchises in the fight for attention.

I certainly felt that impact. For a while.

It started with Covid.

On the 12th of March 2020 the Norwegian government announced schools and workplaces would be shut down for two weeks due to Covid.

On the 15th of March I got a message from an old friend on Facebook, Tarjei A. Heggernes, a strategy professor at a local business school.

For my whole career I have released my art for free use and argued for copyright reform. Back in the early 2000s most of my colleagues looked at me like I was crazy, and some got real angry. Copyright was viewed as the only protection between us and the sea of piracy.

"You wouldn't steal a car" the anti-piracy commercials said before every video or DVD you rented.

When Myspace came along it gave me a small platform to share my art, and to talk about the problems with copyright. And Tarjei was one the very few that actually listened with interest and engaged with my ideas. Often challenging them, occasionally agreeing.

I think I got a couple of thousand followers on Myspace. Then came Facebook and Instagram, and Tarjei was always one of my first followers. Over the years I reached 5,000 followers. Then 10,000. Then 20,000. These numbers are nothing on social media, but they are huge numbers if you actually think about them. Drawing for magazines had been my main income, but as magazines started becoming less and less relevant, more of my income started coming from social media.

So in the Spring of 2020 I was trying to get a foothold in the dark art gallery space, connecting with galleries around the world through social media. But I was also keeping an eye on the spread of Covid. When the government shut Norway down, I knew it wouldn't be for just two weeks. I knew it might change my plans for a long time. Months even.

So when Tarjei messaged me, I was open-minded. I knew I had to change my plans.

"Have you looked into TikTok?" he asked.

I had barely heard the word.

"People are doing art timelapses there. I think you can get a lot of fans."

"Ok, I'll try to post a timelapse there later today."

Tarjei was my first follower on TikTok, and one of very few people who saw my first video. With more videos, my account grew to 10,000 followers. Then to 100,000. And now it's finally settled on 1.3 million. I have a few handful videos that have reached many million people, and one that reached 18 million. The hashtag #dailyinkmonsters, which I created and am virtually the sole user of, has

been seen over 90 million times. That is literally insane for a weird bipolar dark artist from Norway.

It isn't that hard to fathom why TikTok took off the way it did. The 15 second video format, and later the 60 second format, allowed people to show a tiny window into parts of their life. And as the world shut down, it became the place for a lot of us to be social. It felt more honest and direct than Instagram. What started as a miming and dancing app, became a way to communicate in a world where many couldn't even leave their apartment.

TikTok allowed me to get new perspectives. I got introduced to the term "neurodivergent", finally given a name to ideas I've had about my own struggles with bipolar disorder. I became mutuals with great people talking about politics, neurodivergency, transgender identity, indigenous activism, and I got to both spread my ideas and help share other causes. I was asked to do a video on the Canadian residential school horrors, where thousands of indigenous children have been found hidden in unmarked graves, and it reached millions and the art was adopted by survivors of the schools. I started getting contacted by more and more people thanking me, for my art, for my views, for my openness about mental health, for me. Having your voice matter feels intoxicating.

Not only that, but I started realizing that my plan for making a living by making copyright-free art was finally starting to work. By channeling people from my TikTok over to my Patreon, where people can support with as little as 1 dollar a month, I got closer to financial security than I had ever come through traditional freelance art.

In 2001, when I decided to dedicate my work to abolishing copyright and advocating for a new, more free system, none of the tools that I use today existed. I wouldn't learn about Creative Commons for years. Crowdfunding and Patreon didn't exist. And there wasn't any way to spread a message as effectively as TikTok.

I'm not ashamed to admit I got swept away by the algorithm. We all were.

And then, TikTok changed their algorithm. Artists, intellectuals, weirdos, and freaks like me who were used to getting hundreds of thousands of views, all dropped down to merely hundreds of views per video.

The only ones that seemed to stay relevant to the algorithm were the ones heavily invested in doing sponsored content. Covert advertising.

This all happened at the same time TikTok launched their new plans for how to link creators with advertisers, which can be summed up as the most dystopian version of a talent-show, where creators can make free videos with a company's

product, and the company can then pick and choose which ones they will pay to help go viral. It's really a stunningly idiotic scheme.

But it's a stunningly idiotic scheme we all knew was coming, because we had seen it before. It was the same thing Instagram and Facebook did and many others have tried, only marginally more stupid.

If you started an art account early on Instagram, and had any degree of talent, you were almost destined to blow up. Artists, innovators, and creators made Instagram into a space everyone had to be on. And then as soon as a critical mass of audience was reached Instagram would experiment with advertising and paid models, and abandon the accounts that actually attracted the audience.

To understand why this happens, we have to look at what we're selling.

Art used to be a skill. After the printing press had changed how we reproduced art, the establishment of copyright law was a paradigmatic shift in how we view art. No longer were artists primarily paid for their skill and time, but the artwork itself became a non-corporeal entity that was infused with value, hereby called the Intellectual Property, or IP.

This IP can be sold from the creator to a third party up to 70 years after the creator's death. The owner can then hire other artists to work on the IP, infusing their labor into it and increasing its value.

So the mechanics of copyright is to take the labor of artists and infuse it into an IP, and then use the value of that IP to attract new generations of artists to infuse their labor into the IP. In this way the IP makes the artists disposable.

This explains many things in the arts and entertainment industries, from the reckless indifference the music and film industries have to their greatest artists often dying young from substance abuse, to the way the film and video game industries swallow generations of young artists and burn them out at a rate not seen elsewhere. When IP is king, artists are disposable.

A few artists manage to break through this system, and make themselves equally important as the IP they make, at least for a time. Which isn't really a problem for the copyright industries, since they will have 70 years after the artist's death to exploit the work as they please.

Because of this minimal chance of becoming an artist as important as your IP, artists have been in the frontlines of defending copyright law, even when copyright law has always largely been used to exploit and abuse artists.

Social media seemed to present an alternative way to become equally important as your IP, without going through the traditional publishing channels. Social media companies do not demand any exclusive rights from their creators. They do not directly interfere with the creative process. On social media, you have control over how you present yourself and your art. In that sense, social media can seem like freedom.

The reason for this is that the social media corporations are not in the business of selling your IP, but rather a completely different kind of IP. They are selling user data. User data isn't traditionally considered IP and should not be copyrightable, and the legalities behind it are too complex for my poor artist mind, but by using a combination of contractual rights and licenses, software patents, and finally copyright for the user-data databases (instead of the user data itself), user data is effectively used and protected just like any other IP.

We can look at the presidency of Donald Trump to understand some of how it works. It started with the revelation that the Trump campaign had, through Cambridge Analytica, used the user data from Facebook to advertise directly to individual social media users in an unprecedented way. This was rightly seen as a scandal, although it's naive to think his campaign was the only one to use these methods. Still, it's not an understatement to claim user data was a huge part of Trump's winning strategy.

As president, Trump soon went after TikTok, claiming that it was a Chinese surveillance app. While he is known for lying, we should have no problem accepting this claim. We have known for years, through the information leaked by whistleblowers like Edward Snowden, that the US government themselves have been using the user data from American corporations like Google and Facebook to spy on their own citizens and the rest of the world. It's naive to think that the Chinese government would not do the same through Chinese companies.

Trump liked to make statements through his Twitter account. Until Twitter finally blocked him. An action that has been scrutinized far too little. The US president used to be called the "Most powerful man in the world". Yet a private company could simply block a US president. Which, regardless of whether or not you agree with their decision, they could and would not have done unless they considered what they own, their IP, their user data, more valuable than his account.

But how is this related to artists?

The user data a social media owns is worthless unless it reaches a critical mass. In order to reach that critical mass, they need something to attract users. For a

lot of social media, one of the most important things used to attract new users has always been art. And once the critical mass has been reached, artists become less important unless they are able to pay the same way any other advertiser does.

So when I joined TikTok I wasn't just getting free exposure for my art. I was also a tiny part of making TikTok more attractive for users, collecting the user data of a locked-down world population for my corporate overlords. User data that I know will be sold to anyone interested, whether it be private individuals, corporations, or regimes, and which, due to how it's spread, is also bound to be leaked and used by phishers and scammers trying to rip off anyone who falls for their scams. My art helps lay the foundation for future Trumps, government surveillance, and theft.

The myth of the artist selling their soul used to describe artists who achieved great skill at the cost of their own eternal soul. Then, with the advent of copyright, it became a metaphor for selling out, in a sense for letting the IP become more important than the art. Now, we're no longer in the business of selling our own souls. We're selling the souls of our fans. And we're getting paid in exposure.

There is very little that we as individual artists can do to combat this. For many of us, social media will remain a crucial part of both how we survive and how we get our message out there. The problem is at its heart systemic and legal.

The only way to stop it is through a complete reform of how we legally view information. We must abolish copyright, patents, and any other forms of IP or information laws. Everything protected by these laws today needs to have its unlimited distribution protected under freedom of speech, since there is no way to distinguish or draw the line for when information is just data, facts, art, or speech.

Like today there can be exceptions, for such things as libel and dangerous speech. But most importantly there must be put in place stronger protections for personal information, identity, and personhood. The only information that should be protected like we protect copyright or patents today is the information pertaining to your person, which should by law only be available to you and to select others under specific circumstances, like for instance your doctor having access to your medical information.

Unless we abolish copyright and criminalize the hoarding of user data, we will continue creating a dystopian hellscape where artists like me have to continue saying:

Please subscribe to my YouTube. It don't cost a dime, it only costs your soul.

Joe Beedles
United Kingdom

ON *ADDITIVE DUALITY*

Photo: Nemanja Knežević, © Beyond
Quantum Music

In October 2022 I was delighted to have the opportunity to present an audiovisual laser performance titled *Additive Duality* at CZKD in Belgrade, Serbia, as part of Beyond Quantum Music, an event organised by the Institute of Musicology SASA in partnership with Ars Electronica and funded by Creative Europe.

During the summer of 2020, due to the pandemic and a lack of paid work, I had been spending more time than I was usually afforded to explore digital synthesis techniques in much greater depth using the software Max. Around this time there was also another exciting strand developing on the visual side of my arts practice; having just invested in a laser projector at the beginning of 2020 after years of saving up enough money and researching what was needed to explore this under-utilised medium. Playing with various sound synthesis methods,

combining and working through recorded sonic materials gathered over years of experimentation, I have repeatedly found myself returning to the unique and flexible character of pure, elemental sine waves – their unnatural behaviour, synthetic makeup, with no other harmonics present other than the fundamental frequency, appeals to me from the perspective of experimental sound design with the mindset of building sounds from their foundations. It just so happens that sine waves are also one of the most efficient methods for controlling lasers, as the smooth, flowing contours of the sine wave reduce harsh, angular jumps in the path of the travelling beam which can damage the high-speed mirrors that enable this movement.

When I first read the Beyond Quantum Music open call it seemed like an obvious opportunity to really dig into the audiovisual potential of sine waves and have a context with which to frame the work – a refreshing change of focus during that aimless period of the pandemic. Incorporating BQM's concept of the Quantum Synthesizer alongside a wholly additive synthesis palette, I first attempted to explore ideas of complementarity in the manner of Niels Bohr through an exploration of phase and beat frequency relationships. It was my intention to simultaneously extend the dimensionality of the sound waves, scaling down audible frequencies to drive a laser beam that would project the sound's visual counterpart in a physical space, akin to a 3D oscilloscope. In using sine waves as the basis for drawing patterns with a laser projector, it is not long before one arrives in the land of Lissajous figures. Harmonic structures emerge that resemble atomic nuclei, hinting at wormhole imagery and vacuum states.

Ideas and concepts concerning the quantum field are often difficult to grasp and daunting to the uninitiated – conversations surrounding quantum mechanics often make me feel out of my depth. However, being invited to creatively respond to some of the fundamental principles within quantum theory, it was exciting to interpret these ideas in a way analogous to my understanding of the harmonic relationships present in additive synthesis and laser-beam modulation, elucidating some of these core concepts through play and experimentation. The immediate experience of being able to hear and see the direct sound-laser translation (of what is essentially a study on vibration and wave relationships) inspired fresh perspectives in my own thinking and understanding of quantum theory and I would hope that this work inspires similar interpretations within an open audience.

In the time that has elapsed between my first contact with BQM, proposing Additive Duality in September 2020 and then performing the latest iteration of the work in Belgrade in October 2022, I have been fortunate enough to perform the piece in various states of progress to audiences throughout the UK – constantly trialling, testing, scrapping and reconfiguring the work almost obsessively. I have released two EPs of music during this period – Exigent Set

(2021) and Sinecures (2022), with the latter being more of a collection of these live materials reworked for release.

There are certain aesthetic decisions one might consider when presenting live audiovisual work with a laser. When translating studio mixed stereo audio (left, right) directly to laser (X, Y) the drawn image often resembles a restless squiggle, which in the context of Additive Duality, it makes sense as a visualisation of particle formation and chemical reactions – though honestly, Roger Hargreaves' Mr. Messy comes to mind. When inverting the process, translating traditional laser patterns to audio, these typically resemble droning low-frequency sawtooth waves with super wide stereo panning, depending on how they are played back. Most audiovisual laser performances that place an emphasis on audiovisual synchronicity belong to one of these two camps.

With my latest work (and going forward) I attempt to move beyond a simple direct translation in either direction and am considering novel methods of uniting the audio and visual elements in order to transcend both to form something greater than the sum of its parts – the sonic strengths of carefully composed audio alongside hypnotic, spectral laser light.

Photo: Matteo Favero @ IKLECTIK

Marija Maglov*
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Belgrade, Serbia

RADIO ART AS A PLACE OF FREEDOM: Interview with Svetlana Maraš[1]

For Svetlana Maraš, composer who works at the intersection of experimental music and sound art, radio is one of the crucial references in her creative work and career.[2] From 2016 to 2021 she was composer in residence and artistic director at Radio Belgrade Electronic studio. During this time, EMSs Synthi 100 was restored. This historically important synthesizer has a crucial role in her radio work *Post-Excavation Activities*, for which Maraš was awarded the Mokranjac prize, Serbia's highest recognition for composition. She combines her love for radio, live performance and composition with her teaching assignment as a Professor of Creative Music Technology at Hochschule für Musik FHNW, Basel, where she is also Co-head of Electronic Studio. Given the mutual appreciation for radio art, our conversation revolved around creative and listening experiences concerning this medium.
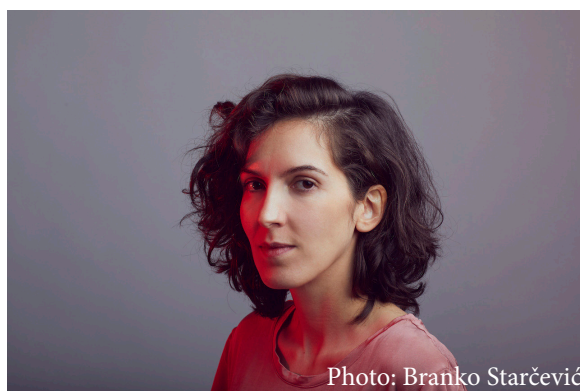
Photo: Branko Starčević

Reading one of your interviews, I was intrigued when you described your early experience while listening the LP of children radio drama Vuk i sedam kozlića. *Was it usual when you were growing up to listen to audio books or radio dramas?*

The answer is: no, not at all! I got my hands on the record accidentally – it was my sister's. She was also playing the piano, and we had one at home, so I started composing on this piano from an early age, and this is why I wanted to go to music school initially – I was interested in music making. Something else also comes to my mind from back then, which drew my attention musically. I had a little book (nowadays they are quite common, but at the time, they were very rare)…When you open it, there is a little piano that you can play, and as you turn the pages there are pictures, sceneries to play along with. It was a game-like experience, and quite a lot like the record you mentioned, related to storytelling. I think probably this is what got me into the world of music and it corresponds to how I consider radio to be – full of storytelling and narrative in the widest sense. There is also a little bit of this childish, magical and wondrous spirit that I have connected to the radio (and music) ever since then.

When did you realize that you could do something similar to the sound world you heard on that record and in the book? Did those experiences influence your interest in the tradition of concrete music, which you are reminiscing on in Post-Excavation Activities*?*

I experimented with sound a lot, ever since I started working with it and quite a lot during the studies. Throughout primary music school and later during high school when I got my first computer, I was composing using MIDI and VSTs – technology which was not that highly developed at the time. Later on, it came spontaneously to experimenting with the no-input mixer and amplified objects, but I have not grown up on the tradition of concrete music, simply because there was no high awareness of it during all these explorations of mine. I think that the interest in a particular world of (small) sounds for me started very early (in my childhood) and became engraved somewhere in my musical memory and also probably in my musical sensibility. As I was developing the tools that I work with and became more skillful and versatile in working with sound, I tried to depict this sound-world that was already there. Concrete music and Schaeffer's approach – for me that way of working always looked like a laboratory which involved a great deal of experimentation. And this is where I saw a similarity to what I was doing. Unlike *Elektronische Musik* which draws you more into thinking very accurately about sound, its properties, and processes, concrete music was for me a way of getting into a materiality of sound through experimenting.

Also, the idea of capturing the worldly sounds onto the tape, like they did in early days of radiophonic music, always seemed very physical and appealing to me.

Where does this physicality and tangibility come in if you work on a computer? How do you relate to it, how do you feel it? Can you tell me more about this discrepancy between this literal materiality in history and the way you work today?

What helped in connecting these worlds for me was the field of improvisation. As an electronic musician, it is through improvisation that I developed my performing tools. I have a variety of controllers – tangible ones, pressure based, foot pedals – and they contribute a lot to what I can gain from sound. I developed a highly performative setup, and these real-time manipulations I often record and then I can use them as a material to compose with. I usually don't start from sampling a sound and working with it visually on a computer screen – there are lots of physical things involved in the process of making the sound. You can't achieve such a result by drawing automations in the software in the same way as using your body to play on an instrument. In this way, you can control the parameters very dynamically, and this expressiveness ends up engraved in the sound. Referring to *Post-Excavation Activities*, there was a lot of work done on the Synthi in this way, where the manipulations were momentary and this ended up in the recording. Movement and changes within the sound, for me, reflect in some way its materiality.

Photo: Irena Selaković

In addition to the reminiscence and recreation of the materiality of work in the studio as laboratory, were you trying to creatively rethink the specific experience of listening to radio art, or maybe listening to magnetic tape with its own sound qualities?

One important thing for me that I think about when speaking about electronic music, is "acoustic space" – how I call it nowadays. If you think very generally, the acoustic space of electronic music that we can hear on YouTube through our loudspeakers, this variety of albums, is a specific way of working with the sound in stereo format, and we are used to listening like this. It is an interesting phenomenon though, that requires a lot of thinking about how this space between the two speakers (left and right) is being used. Now, radio for me works a bit differently. Radio is a bit like a vacuum – it is an empty space without the resonance, which is its most important feature. And it's not defined by any format – mono or stereo… Unlike the concert hall, acoustic space at radio is artificial, and we need to build it. It is not enough creating the sound itself but also the "space" where we place the sound. If we make one sound object – we can't put it into this void, but we need to create a small universe around it. What for me radiophonic composition allows and, in a way, invites us to do, is to basically build these acoustic spaces throughout the whole piece and to move (together with the listener) through them. This is very exciting for me and much more enriching as an experience than having the whole album of mainstream electronic music, for example, fixed in one single place without moving anywhere. This way of working is related specifically to the radio, because of this ancient acousmatic idea that there is a curtain and we do not see anything on the other side of it. It is some sort of dark place where literally no sounds exist before we put them there. Therefore we create an illusion with each piece and we invite the listeners in. We are taking them on a journey through this virtual space that we created. There is something very physical to it because this is how listening works in real life – we are hearing something here, something crackles there, something sounds behind the window, we are moving through different rooms… There is much greater variety of acoustic spaces in real life than in produced music in general. Radiophonic composition invites going into a bit of a different direction, and rethinking this subject in a more creative way.

As a historical phenomenon, radio art was connected to the studios, mostly within the institution of radio and the technical limitations of what can be broadcasted. In a contemporary digital environment, what do you extract from this historical context when you are working in radio art?

I guess what connects radiophonic compositions since the early days is a feeling of "real-time" and something happening "live". Radio is an ongoing thing that never stops. And music becomes something that you have to glue to this ever-rolling tape. There is no silence on the radio. I think this is what makes it special although it is not an audible quality. This makes a huge difference in the way we approach composing for the radio. I have experienced this by producing a show *Electronic studio live* (at Radio Belgrade 3) with my colleague Ksenija Stevanović and recently in Basel, in a project with my students and Radio SRF2 Kultur. In both shows, pieces were performed on the radio and broadcasted live. It was a very special feeling to follow this line of events, from making the sound in the studio to going live "on air". There was something specific to it knowing that this sound that was being made, is going somewhere right now. It is quite different conceptually than if you are making something and you have this whole, finished piece from beginning to the end, which you present then. Live radio broadcast therefore is a very specific format, which creates a unique listening experience. If you have (like we did in these two shows I mentioned) performers and audience in the studio, technicians who are in charge of the broadcast, presenters announcing the show, all in one room, they are all part of the same process. During a live radio show like this, we are all listening with the same ears, and at the same time with the ears of the ones who will hear this in the radio broadcast. This is for me a beautiful and touching experience because it has something very emphatic and human to it, that unites us all, and I think this quality brings us closer to the sound and music itself.

Regarding a newly found recognition of radio art in the music community, it is important to note that prior to recognition of your radio art work in 2020, Mokranjac *was awarded to a radiophonic piece for the first time in 2017 to Ivana Stefanović for* Veliki kamen. *She noted that this was meaningful confirmation of her long-lasting attitude that radio art is musical art, although it was not perceived as such only few decades before. What are your thoughts on this complex relationship between music and radio art?*

I see it as historical question that mirrors the question of bringing noises into music, at the beginning of the 20th century, and the dilemma of whether noise is a musical sound. I think we went in theory and practice through these questions very thoroughly and we have come to the point where it is not necessary for us to deal with them anymore. Which is an amazing place to be at, really, considering how much struggle it took. To take Schaeffer as an example again – his work depicts this transition, from sound effects to musical sounds. We are so far

from it historically, that I have myself grown up on the thought that I can equally use anything that is sound or noise in my music. Also, looking at my students and how they produced pieces for the radio, I actually noticed how much more freedom there is to decide what the material that we work with is, and how we manipulate these different layers. Nowadays, we can work with variety of sounds – referential or not-referential ones, soundscapes, music (in a more conventional sense) – all within one work, and all these different layers of acoustic being could have different importance in the piece. Just the fact that we can very freely combine all of them tells a lot about the heterogenous state of things that we have right now. The work of Hanna Hartman is a great example of this – how she mixes materials of different origins and derives amazing musicality from concrete sounds, leaving us with a question mark: what is it that we are hearing? Considering all of this, I think the distinctions between music and radio art, or any other format, are not there anymore.

Photo: Andrey Gordasevich

Judging by research projects, exhibitions and literature on radio art, it seems that the field is becoming ever more interesting for practitioners and theoreticians alike in recent years. What do you think is happening now that is sparking this interest?

In my experience while working with students, I noticed that they had no connection to radio at all. Somehow it does seem to be old medium for the people who were born maybe in the 2000s. In that sense it did not seem to me that radio is a widely accepted and very popular medium, except for us enthusiasts. Interesting people are bringing it into the cultural field in a new way and trying to find some new formats for the old medium, but it does not seem that young people resonate with it a lot. What is interesting is that once they found themselves on the other side of the production process and made works for the radio (my students), it opened up an amazingly creative space which they enjoyed, because they stepped out of what their work was otherwise, into something new. This is connected to everything I said before about considering these acoustic spaces and also the certain storytelling that comes with the use of sounds. I think in that way radio is always, when compared to musical mainstream, something more creative, more free and more experimental. It is really a place of freedom.

Main Theme:

Fighting for the Attention:
Music and Art
on Social Media

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THE INTERNET OF MUSICAL STUFF (IoMuSt): UBIMUS PERSPECTIVES ON ARTIFICIAL SCARCITY, VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES AND (DE)OBJECTIFICATION

Abstract: Part of the recent developments in Ubiquitous Music (ubimus) research involve the proposal of the Internet of Musical Stuff (IoMuSt) as an expansion and complement to the Internet of Musical Things

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(IoMusT). The transition from IoMusT to IoMuSt entails a critique of blockchain and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) as technologies for allotment, disciplination and regimentation of formerly open and freely accessible artistic web content. In brief, the replacement of the operative concepts constructed around "things" with strategies based on "stuff" highlights the underlying interconnected processes and factors that impact interaction and usage, pointing to resources that become disposable and valueless within an objectified and monetized musical internet. This conceptual and methodological turn allows us to deal with distributed-creativity phenomena in marginalized spaces, highlighting the role of resources that are widely reproducible, fluid and ever-changing. In this paper, we address IoMuSt-based responses to issues such as the artificial production of scarcity associated with the application of NFTs. The selected musical examples showcase the meshwork of dynamic relationships that characterizes ubimus research. In particular, we focus on a comprovisation project involving VOIP visual communication through Skype, Meet and Zoom, a ubimus experience involving a Telegram chatbot and a set of musical experiments enabled by an online tool for remote live patching

Keywords: ubimus; NFTs; Internet of Musical Stuff; (de)objectification.

Introduction: Is ubimus made of things?

This paper explores the implications of the adoption of the Internet of Things within the context of ubiquitous music making (ubimus), through the analysis of three artistic and technological projects: *Beat Byte Bot*, intercontinental live patching and *Ouija*. Their selection is based on the contrast of aims and resources, highlighting the ability of ubimus frameworks to support diverse aesthetics within a community-constructed and shared knowledge base. We elaborate the concept of *stuff*, as a counterpoint to the increasingly reified discourse of networked things. This perspective opens the opportunity to engage with some of the contradictions of market-oriented technological designs and their negative consequences on artistic creativity, collaboration and sustainability.

The expansion of the access to consumer-level technology in peripheral countries and particularly the emergence of communities of practice based on open-source support and production of know-how have triggered a change in the music field toward a democratization of the access to creative music making. This is the context that enabled the emergence of the ubimus community (Keller et al. 2014). The key objectives of this movement – namely more inclusive, creative and relaxed participation in music-making and an active pursuit for everyday contexts suitable to creative practice – have been positively assessed by authors

not directly involved in ubimus activities. Despite this positive outlook, ubimus researchers have identified a growing tension within the field. This tension is the result of a tendency of part of the musical and technological practitioners to cling to genre-based designs involving the use of 'notes', 'instruments', 'orchestras' and similar notions inherited from European 19th-century acoustic-instrumental approaches.[2] In some cases, this perspective is used to justify long-held myths such as the existence of the creative genius (cf. Weisberg 1993 for a critical analysis of this aspect) or its performatic counterpart, i.e., 'the virtuoso' (Wessel and Wright 2002).

According to Keller and Messina (2022), an open research issue in ubimus is how to approach diverse musical traditions and cultural contexts without subscribing to the prescriptive or culture-cleansing tendencies that have plagued 20th-century music theory. An interesting path is suggested by Kramann's (2021) piece *In X*. Kramann incorporates constraints in his generative processes to emulate the techniques applied by Terry Riley's *In C*, while avoiding the mold of yet another stylistic study. The objective is to create a new musical process with its own internal logic that establishes an open dialogue with the extant repertoire. In a sense, Kramann's perspective is similar to the adoption of ubimus archaeological methods in current creative practices (Lazzarini and Keller 2021), as exemplified by the live-coding examples proposed by Azzigotti and Radivojević (2022) and enabled by the M5live prototype. The authors base their work on a replica of one of the first acoustic compilers (MUSIC V) to deploy their live-coding practice on a web-based platform. Thus, they ground their artistic proposal on a sustainable approach to technological usage, an approach that may encompass a wide diversity of aesthetic outcomes.

Despite these examples, there is an unsolved tension between supporting established genres and expanded forms of creativity. We believe this conflict of aims will worsen as new research threads that engage with past music-making increase their presence in ubimus. Hence, a potential limit for technological diversity may be slowly emerging: How innovative can our methods become before they lose relevance and relatedness to the extant musical-knowledge base? Are we hitting a limit in the rate of technological obsolescence and is this process starting to take a toll on musical innovation?

Focusing on creative music making as an activity has several implications on the study of material resources (Barreiro and Keller 2010). Ubiquitous music phenomena involve both the objects available locally and the materials accessible by means of technological infrastructure. Therefore, two types of resources have been proposed: 1) the resources present on site, defined in the creativity

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2   See critical appraisals of the acoustic-instrumental views in Bhagwati (2013); Bown et al. (2009); Keller (2000).

literature as the place factor (*collocated resources*), and 2) the materials accessed through creativity support tools (which may or may not be collocated) (*distributed resources*). We expand this analysis by focusing on the temporal dimension and on the impact of sharing on the characteristics of the resources.

Following economic approaches to creativity, ubiquitous music research has introduced methods to deal with the dynamics of sharing material resources (Keller et al. 2014). Material resources may be *rival*, *non-rival* or *anti-rival*. Rival resources lose value when shared. Non-rival resources can be widely distributed without losing value. Sonic information is a good example of a non-rival resource. Sonic information can be freely shared without any impact on its social value. Contrastingly, if a food stock is partitioned within a community its value is reduced proportionally to its depletion rate: an empty food stock has no social value. Because digital resources can gain or lose value depending on their context of usage, rivalry is not exclusively determined by the characteristics of the resources. This aspect is addressed in the musical examples, as it constitutes an important factor in shaping the properties of the materials and the stakeholders' behaviors.

Another conflict is also manifest in recent ubimus proposals. The multiplicity of musical practices and the creative strategies adopted by grassroots initiatives puts pressure on the ongoing attempts to concentrate digital resources and services in the hands of a few corporate conglomerates. This struggle between center and periphery pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic (Santos 2011), with detrimental consequences to everyday contexts that were previously untouched by information-technology initiatives. Domestic settings are a case in point. They have become a privileged venue for music making, involving specific creative methods and strategies for sharing that may enrich current and future musical developments (Keller et al. 2022). For instance, as Maciel and coauthors (2022) suggest, some social-network formats adopted by emerging artists are gaining traction because of the presence of ubimus techniques. These practices treat the limitations of online music making as opportunities for creative action rather than as an obstacle for in-person instrumental performance.

Despite the positive contributions of these grassroots initiatives, the increased reliance on network-based resources by multiple practitioners has spiked the voracity of the corporate conglomerates. As Santos (2011) predicted, globalization does not only imply a concentration of assets by a small number of financial centers. It also involves the deployment of information infrastructure as an attempt to secure more digital resources. A recent development of this predatory strategy is exemplified by the marketing of non-fungible tokens (NFTs). Non-fungible tokens are used as unique identifiers of digital resources. They incorporate the logic and technology of cryptocurrency, namely, blockchain (Chohan 2021). Overall, the potential impact of a widespread monetization of the digital assets

can be disastrous for community initiatives such as ubimus, with particularly pernicious effects on low-income and peripheral countries.

Things vs. Stuff

The Ubiquitous Music Group (g-ubimus) has fostered the expansion of a thread of ecologically grounded artistic proposals that dates back to the late 1990s (Keller and Lazzarini 2017). For instance, as a conceptual grounding for her artistic practice Teresa Connors' thesis on Ecological Performativity draws upon a philosophical school called Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO, cf. Morton 2011). Also known as "speculative realism", OOO takes as its starting point the conviction "that real things exist – these things are objects, not just amorphous 'Matter,' objects of all shapes and sizes, from football teams to Fermi-Dirac condensates or, if you prefer something more ecological, from nuclear waste to birds' nests" (Morton 2011, 165).

So long as we stick to material reality,[3] we may agree with Morton's premises. The identification of discrete things from an otherwise undistinguished continuum (cf. the "amorphous matter" cited by Morton) is instrumental to the development of verbal languages. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, "if words stood for pre-existing concepts, they would all have exact equivalents in meaning from one language to the next; but this is not true" (Saussure 1959, 116). An opposite, Platonic standpoint, postulates the pre-existence of things to human consciousness and, therefore, to language (cf. the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*: Plato 1938, 119-140). Within ubimus, the formulation of Creative Semantic Anchoring (ASC, from the original Portuguese) makes us stand with Saussure rather than Plato (cf. Simurra et al. 2022; Keller et al. 2020; Keller and Feichas 2018; Messina and Mejía 2020). Based on the usage of verbal materials to facilitate creative processes, ASC relies on the semantic content of words as a replacement or supplement to the symbolic systems that are traditionally associated with musical practices (e.g., common-practice notation), pointing to a *radical* usage of verbal resources as musical material (cf. Simurra et al. 2022). In this sense, we argue that ASC may also replace the Platonically[4] fixed, or ab-

3 While we defend the concept of reality in the context of our critical discussion of ontologies, we need to acknowledge that this term has been used in problematic ways in the field of computing. In this sense, we subscribe to Weiser's early critique of virtual reality as a tool that "as the goal of fooling the user – of leaving the everyday physical world behind", something that "is at odds with the goal of better integrating the computer into human activities, since humans are of and in the everyday world" (Weiser 1991, 76).
4 On the strongly Platonic derivation of traditional musical categories, see for example Goehr (1992) and Cook (2013).

solute, musical categories with the contingency, conventionality, flexibility and negotiability of verbal meaning.[5]

Back to things, on top of their linguistic importance (whether from a Platonic or a Saussurean standpoint), they are paramount to "stabilise human life insofar as they give it a continuity" (Han cit. Borcherdt 2021). Things – from personal objects to public monuments – carry historical and affective memories, helping human beings to hold onto their collective, familiar and individual pasts (cf. Nora 1989; Sherman 1995; Pugliese 2007). Therefore, removing the presence of material referents from daily life may reduce our ability to establish emotionally meaningful associations among objects and beings. Rather than increasing participation and presence, a by-product of the usage of digital representations may entail a reduction of socially meaningful engagement. Han may be right when he argues that "the digital order *deobjectifies* the world by *rendering it information*" (Han cit. Borcherdt 2021, italics in the original). Despite the loss of memory, knowledge or insight that this deobjectification entails, as researchers in the field of the digital humanities we cannot refrain from highlighting the potentialities of a digitally interconnected world.

In his critique of intellectual property, Puckette suggests that while physical goods need work and raw materials to be reproduced and distributed, "information, in the form of a bit stream for instance, can be copied as many times as you wish, at almost no cost" (Puckette 2004). In other words, Han's "digital order" may challenge capitalism and monetary power by introducing "zero-value commodit[ies]" (Puckette 2004) that are unlimitedly reproducible and shareable. Moreover, the open-source movement to which Puckette fervently subscribes, prescribes that programs can and should be constantly modified, upgraded, improved and reconfigured by users or developers (Perens 1999).[6] It is precisely this collective praxis of continuous modification that deobjectifies the entities that populate an open-access digital ecology. A tool such as Pd, the open-source software featured in Puckette's production and manifesto, ceases to be a singular, self-contained object, to become a universe of different versions, branches-in-progress, spin-off designs, customized libraries and (as a *sine qua non* condition) a community-shared asset. The initially clear-cut object Pd pulverizes into multiform and not-immediately-discernible *stuff*. This process of deobjectification results perhaps in what Morton calls "amorphous matter", with the added bonus of overcoming scarcity and ensuring free access.

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5   This notion may be expanded to the realm of infrastructure for creative practice, if infrastructure is understood as a process of negotiation rather than as a given constraint.

6   This need for a community-oriented support of technological assets has slowly but consistently been acknowledged by the corporate stakeholders. The expansion of open-source commercial platforms and the various attempts to hijack unpaid work by means of crowdsourcing are illustrative examples.

According to Puckette, monetizing digital information such as software makes the assets artificially scarce, undoing precisely the aforementioned potential for community sharing (2004):

> Physical goods can only be in the possession of one person at a time; if I have a loaf of bread, I would still have to work to produce a second, identical loaf. If two people want the same loaf, they can't both have it. Material obeys conservation laws. Information and ideas don't obey any such conservation law; more ideas can come out of a system than went in. Information, in the form of a bit stream for instance, can be copied as many times as you wish, at almost no cost. [...] [Intellectual property] effectively makes a zero-value commodity cost money by making copies artificially scarce. All the billions of dollars worth of 'software' are intrinsically worth nothing at all, and [intellectual property] law's only purpose is to make them cost money instead of being free (Puckette 2004).

Puckette's critique of the artificial production of scarcity through the monetization of intellectual property is also applicable to non-fungible tokens (NFTs). As a subcategory of the same blockchain technology used to mint and exchange cryptocurrencies, NFTs target the multimedia digital-art market – initially mostly visual but potentially applicable to sound files, music tracks and other web resources, i.e., typical tools of the trade for artists.

Chohan (2021) states that "the primary interest in NFTs emerges from uses that involve creating scarcity to ascribe value to code-built digital objects" (Chohan 2021, 3). As implied by the corporate discourse of a blockchain colossus like Ethereum, NFT-based scarcity is also secured through the deployment of labels such as "ownership", "the real thing" and "the market value":

> The creator of an NFT gets to decide the scarcity of their asset. For example, consider a ticket to a sporting event. Just as an organizer of an event can choose how many tickets to sell, the creator of an NFT can decide how many replicas exist. Sometimes these are exact replicas, such as 5000 General Admission tickets. Sometimes several are minted that are very similar, but each slightly different, such as a ticket with an assigned seat. In another case, the creator may want to create an NFT where only one is minted as a special rare collectible. [...] Naysayers often bring up the fact that NFTs "are dumb" usually alongside a picture of them screenshotting an NFT artwork. "Look, now I have that image for free!" they say smugly. Well, yes. But does googling an image of Picasso's Guernica make you the proud new owner of a multi-million dollar piece of art history? Ultimately owning the real thing is as valuable as the market makes it. The more a piece of content is screen-grabbed, shared, and generally used the more value it gains.[7] Owning

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7   See definition of rivalry in the introduction to this article and in Keller et al. (2014).

the verifiably real thing will always have more value than not (Ethereum n.d.).

The "real thing" as employed by Ethereum emerges in terms of what Levinas calls "ontological imperialism" (1979, 44-46), instrumental to the neutralization of otherness, or, in Levinas's own terms, the "reduction of the other to the same" (1979, 43). This neutralization is implemented via the usage of operative terms like "market value" and "ownership". By assigning social labels to entities that without the labels are immaterial and unlimitedly reproducible, NFTs prepare the ground for the allotment, disciplination and regimentation of a network-based capitalist economy.

Our efforts within the ubimus community are not based on the identification or idolatry of "real things" as enablers of digital interactions, collaborative processes and distributed agencies that characterize our activities – we prefer to use the concept of "stuff" when talking about interconnected creative actions. In general, we argue that digital interactions do not need the fixedness of "things". These processes can be encouraged through free and ongoing exchanges of *stuff*. Things are vulnerable to the imposition of hegemonic territorialities and are subject to reification, objectification and – in the context of blockchain and NFTs – monetization. Contrastingly, stuff is pliable, it is fairly amorphous, it changes with usage, it relies on context to acquire meaning, it may be persistent or volatile depending on the demands of the stakeholders, it supports handling through flexible temporalities, it incorporates value through sharing and it adapts to non-hierarchical territorialities. We will try to illustrate the characteristic flexibility, volatility/persistence and amorphousness of stuff with regards to our case studies: for instance, one of the key features of the intercontinental live patching sessions is the intermingling of persistent and volatile resources in terms of digital infrastructure, ownership/authorship attribution and aural results; another example, *Beat Byte Bot*, with its open-ended architecture, could be described as a flexible and amorphous agglomeration of stuff, rather than a demarcated, autonomous thing.

Recent ubimus research has advocated for the adoption of the IoMusT, namely, the Internet of Musical Things (Turchet et al. 2018). As far as our group is concerned, the validity or productivity of such a proposal is by no means under review. Nevertheless, there are caveats that need to be considered. In this paper we introduce a complementary and phenomenologically different construct, namely, the Internet of Musical Stuff – IoMuSt (Messina et al. 2022). Being a community-oriented entity, musical stuff may feature emergent relational properties that only become accessible through deployment and usage (Keller et al. 2015). Enlisting a set of qualities demands several iterations of usage involving diverse stakeholders and contexts. Furthermore, a fixed set of characteristics

can hardly be established because its functional properties depend on the local resources. In line with the parsimony suggested by the ubimus methods, we discuss key characteristics that have emerged in recent ubimus projects. These are, by necessity, subject to revisions while this research gathers weight through field deployments. Let us consider volatility and persistence.

Temporalities of creative resources

According to Keller et al. (2014), the material dimension of ubiquitous music ecosystems encompasses the sound sources and the tools used to generate creative musical products and the material results of the musical activity. The material dimension may provide the most direct window to experimental observation in creativity assessments. For instance, Dingwall's (2008) generation and development stages can easily be assessed by measuring the quantity of the resources produced. *Putting the pieces together* involves selection, grouping or disposal of resources, therefore both objective and subjective strategies are feasible. Objective assessments target the resource yield and consumption as a function of time (Ferraz and Keller 2014). Subjective data can be captured through qualitative or quantitative feedback from the participants.

Bennett (1976) suggests that musical creative processes start from a single germinal idea. Collins (2005) also adopts this view but allows for several musical ideas (labeling them themes or motifs). Contrastingly, the models of Hickey (2003), Burnard and Younker (2004), Chen (2006) and Dingwall (2008) feature exploratory activities as preceding the selection of materials. The methodological difficulty resides in the task choice for creativity assessments.

The underlying hypothesis is – following the models of Hickey, Burnard and Younker, Chen and Dingwall – that both restricting and yielding access to materials are central strategies. Therefore, if the experimenter selects the materials or the tools, she is taking the place of the stakeholders. The results cannot be used to determine whether the activity begins by exploration or by a well-defined plan with a fixed objective. Furthermore, when the musical materials are given, it is not possible to draw conclusions regarding how the material resources were collected. This methodological problem has been labeled *early domain restriction* (Keller et al. 2011).

Xenakis (1992 [1963]) suggested that creative musical activities may occur in time or out of time. This idea has been adopted by the human-computer interaction literature under the labels of synchronous and asynchronous activities. Applying this notion to material resources introduces a new target for experimental study. Some materials may only become available during the creative activity and cannot be recycled for future use. Other resources may be iteratively used

when engaging asynchronous creative work. Examples of the former are the improvisatory performances based on network infrastructure. Each participant's action depends on the sonic cues provided synchronously by the other participants. These sonic cues are only available in time, therefore they can be classified as *volatile material resources*. Other resources can be incorporated in the context of iterative cycles of creative activity. An example is provided by the concept of musical prototype (Miletto et al. 2011). A musical prototype is a data structure that supports actions by multiple stakeholders enabled by network infrastructure. According to Miletto et al. (2011), a single creative product is shared by the participants engaged in the activity. Participants can also comment on their actions and on their partners' actions (more on this below). Creative decisions are the result of a cumulative process of material exchanges that can last from a few hours to several months. Hence, a musical prototype can be classified as a *persistent material resource.*

Several theoretical proposals on creativity label the results of creative activity as 'products' (Kozbelt et al. 2010). If we take into account the ongoing mutual adaptations among agents and objects during creative activities (Keller and Capasso 2006), a functionally oriented description of the material resources becomes necessary. Material results may be either resources or products depending on their role within the context of the activity. For example, the sounds collected in San Francisco's Bart transportation system (also known as metro or subway) serve as the material base for the creative product *Metrophonie* (Keller 2002). The same collection of sounds was expanded through ecological modeling techniques (Keller and Berger 2001; Keller and Truax 1998) to be employed as material resources within the multimedia installation *The Urban Corridor* (Capasso, Keller and Tinajero 2000).[8] In *The Urban Corridor*, the actions of the participants shape the organization of the multimodal experience (Keller, Capasso and Wilson 2002). Every instance of the piece produces a personal creative product, different each time the installation is visited. Thus, instead of being delivered as a definitive creative product, the sonic sources of *The Urban Corridor* are available as material resources for the creative actions exerted by the audience. While in *Metrophonie,* the resources can be separated from the creative products, this separation is not possible in *The Urban Corridor*. In the latter, the sound sources are also the materials and the creative product is equated to the emergent relational properties of the interactions among the multiple agents within the installation space. *The Urban Corridor* furnishes an early example of the creative usage of *stuff*.

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8   See documentation and examples in http://www.capassokellertinajero.com/.

Resource sharing and rivalry

As implied by the discussion proposed by Puckette, there are some interesting observations to be gathered through the application of rivalry in ubimus design. Resources for creative activities can be characterized by their level of relevance and originality (Weisberg 1993). In the context of group activities, these two factors constitute opposite forces (Ferraz and Keller 2014). Creative resources that are unique and have not been shared among group members keep their creative potential and have a high level of originality. Through sharing, original resources lose their creative potential while they gain acceptance among group members. The most relevant resources are the ones most widely distributed with the highest social acceptance. Therefore, since creative rival resources lose value through social acceptance, they can negatively impact originality. On the other hand, creative non-rival resources can be freely distributed without affecting originality. Given that non-rival resources can be widely shared, they can attain higher levels of relevance than their rival counterparts.

If audio-processing techniques are excluded, sound samples can be classified as creative rival resources. The novelty of the creative products that use samples decreases proportionally to the number of copies of the original sounds. Deterministic audio-synthesis models have similar properties. Since they generate the same sounds for a fixed set of parameters, they can also be classified as rival. Contrastingly, physical objects produce different sonic outcomes each time they are excited, the events can be classified as non-rival. On a similar vein, an ecologically grounded synthesis algorithm can render multiple events without producing repeated instances (Keller and Truax 1998). Other timbre-based musical practices – such as the use of distorted guitar sounds – are also examples of non-rival strategies.

Summing up, the application of the quality of rivalry within the design of ubimus ecosystems furnishes interesting perspectives to refine both the planning and assessment strategies. There is an intrinsic compromise between the availability of material resources and their level of originality. Original resources tend to be scarce. Thus, the number of copies and the ease of access is inversely proportional to the level of originality. This relationship does not hold for sustainable generative strategies, such as ecologically grounded synthesis. Furthermore, anti-rival resources tend to reinforce their acceptance within the community. Thus, they increase their relevance. The complex dynamics among these factors are slowly being unveiled. The examples presented in the next section feature specificities that point to opportunities to increase the relevance and originality of the processes and products without falling into the trap of monetization.

Ubimus cases and IoMuSt

Beat Byte Bot

Developed by Gil Panal and Luís Arandas, *Beat Byte Bot* is a Telegram-based tool for web-based audio management that draws upon several features of chatbots (not only text and media interaction, but also the time-tracking of multimedia messages) to create volatile and collaborative user-generated audio databases (Panal and Arandas 2021). The telegram chatbot here functions as the entry point to multiplatform, open-ended modular architectures that incorporate a server API (Heroku) and an external database (Firebase), which may be further augmented by, say, multitrack waveform editors and tools for signal processing. The potential support of *Beat Byte Bot* ranges from instant collaborative track mixing to collective remote composition and asynchronous improvisation, through to the quick establishment of creative audio communities (Panal and Arandas 2021).

We argue that the agility and versatility of the audio sharing modalities (via such commonly used infrastructure as an instant messaging tool), the creation of shared and volatile databases, and the open-endedness of the architecture, all contribute to place *Beat Byte Bot*, together with its potential collective activities, within the territory of stuff rather than that of things. Furthermore, its chatbot operationality allows for the easy integration of verbal content, making it possible to associate the tool with ASC-based developments.

Despite its potential, there are several caveats that the usage of automated dialogue might present when attempting to support group-based creative endeavors. The current functionality of the system targets straightforward choices of readymade sounds. Achieving meaningful selections may seem simple when the participants are faced with a finite set of contrasting choices. But what happens when the categories are not clearly delineated or when they reject clear-cut classifications? Furthermore, consensus-building is among the most complex problems faced by collective endeavors. This activity usually relies not just on verbal exchanges but also on body gestures, intonation, non-verbal cues and other meta-language exchanges. How to incorporate this type of information into chatbots is still work-in-progress.

Intercontinental live patching on Kiwi

Among the recent instances of ubimus research relevant to network-based interaction, we can mention an intercontinental live patching experience (Mes-

sina et al. 2019) using the software Kiwi. Kiwi is a visual-programming environ-
ment that replicates the functionalities of patching[9] software like Max and Pd
(Paris et al. 2017), while supporting synchronous remote collaboration, whereby
several users can work simultaneously on the same project from distant loca-
tions, similarly to what happens with Google Docs.

The intercontinental live patching experience involved two academic groups
based in three different universities between Brazil and France, namely, the Live/
Acc/Patch research group from the two Brazilian Federal Universities of Acre
and Paraíba, and a working group based at the University Paris 8 in France,
gathered around the undergraduate module *Introduction à la programmation
avec Kiwi, Max et Pure Data 1*.

Encouraged by the idiosyncrasies of the Kiwi infrastructure, the participants
adopted an entirely open, collaborative and non-hierarchical approach. Such an
approach might be considered a bug by some software developers, for whom it
is desirable that the author of a document "authorizes" or "blocks" the collabo-
ration of other authors. In Kiwi all the participants retain the same, unrestricted
access rights. In addition, the operations on each patch do not leave genealogical
traces, that is, it is very difficult to ascertain who created a specific object or add-
ed a specific comment on a patch. As a result, potential hierarchical barriers are
totally avoided. Subverting the logic of scarcity and aforementioned social labels
of "ownership", this open, collaborative and non-hierarchical approach forms
one of the pillars of what we call IoMuSt.

One of the main characteristics of our Kiwi experience was the conflictual
territoriality that emerged from the simultaneous activity of different agents
over a common and limited virtual resource (the screen, or the patch canvas).
Despite the disputes, however, the non-hierarchical nature of the infrastructure
impeded the establishment of power imbalances, something that perhaps could
have happened if the design adopted a strictly enforced policy of resource own-
ership and access.

Ouija for Strings and the Internet

Written by Luzilei Aliel, *Ouija* is inspired by the Ouija board, a flat surface
with letters, numbers and symbols. In Ouija sessions, various individuals try to
communicate with spirits or supernatural entities by answering questions in a
conversation between different existential planes that communicate through the

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9   The term patching has been incorporated from the visual metaphor adopted by Puckette
in his design of Max. The patcher or patch refers to the virtual window where the code objects
are inserted.

movement of a glass. We use the reference to the Ouija ritual in a form of inter-actions between agents via the Internet. One of the aims of the *Ouija* project is to make music based on teamwork infrastructure without imposing "rules" or restrictions such as synchronicity or hierarchy in the interaction.

The two performers who participated in *Ouija* are professional musicians, with higher education and training in contemporary music (at PhD level). Agent A was 32 and B was 28 at the time, both men. A is a cellist. B is a violist. The session took place in two locations: São Paulo, Brazil and Bowling Green, United States. *Ouija* is designed for strings, electronic sounds and online communica-tion via VOIP protocol (e.g., Skype, Meet, Zoom). Zoom was chosen over other similar tools because of the subjects' familiarity with its usage and by virtue of its audio and video recording support.

In terms of electroacoustic materials, we developed a soundscape to simulate the mystical atmosphere of a Ouija session. This soundscape is composed of a track of recorded sounds, which helps to establish an auditory relationship be-tween the performers, to compensate for the impossibility of listening in person. Three sound sources were used to generate the track: radio noise, glass sounds (glass) and voice.

Radio noise was generated from white noise processed via granulation. This noise represents the "tuning" or connection between the spirits and the per-formers. As a formal function, noise determines the beginning and end of the part, acting as a time cue in the guide plane. The glass sounds were recorded using a crystal glass. They were subdivided into three types: resonant shorts, non-reverb shorts, and long (scraping). The selection of materials with the best quality and sound definition was carried out in improvisation sessions. In terms of verbal material, three words were used – one for each subgroup: 1) /resonant/, 2) /glass/ and 3) /scraping/. The three words were processed by a text genera-tor based on Markov chains, on the PHP Markov chain[10] text generator plat-form. Although the system is simple, it provides quick features for building text threads.

The electroacoustic track has two functions: 1) to establish sound connec-tions unrelated to gestural and visual interaction, and 2) to establish a time frame for the contingent elements of the piece. These features work as hybrid strategies between synchronicity and asynchronicity.[11] Although the agents are not acting synchronously due to the delay caused by the internet connection, the electro-acoustic track can be triggered by both agents (each on its own player) with a smaller temporal variation than the latency of the remote support, allowing

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10   https://projects.haykranen.nl/markov/demo/.
11   Recent ubimus developments, centered on quasi-synchronicity, include Messina et al. (2019).

both start and stop performance via synchronization mechanisms. This strategy enhances synchronous thinking, without framing the *Ouija* project proposal in traditional performance, and allowing the reuse of resources.

In terms of instrumental materials, the *Ouija* project used the method of guidelines modules (Aliel 2022), which are indicators represented by capital letters in the *Ouija* score. Guideline modules are structures that are at a boundary between compositional resources and improvised interpretations and actions. The information contained in each module offers a general indication of the agent's or instrumentalist's behavior, but at the same time allows a process of choices and variations to take place based on the performer's desire. The modules include technical aspects and indications of procedures.

The score of *Ouija* uses three types of guidelines: 1) description of technical aspects related to the instruments; 2) musical parameters; 3) subjective instructions. In the first case, technical references are common to most stringed instruments. For example, *sul tasto*, *pizzicato*, etc. In the second case, we insert parametric references, groups of musical notes or dynamics. For example, in the letter E a musical scale is indicated and a general dynamics in piano is requested. In the third case, we create subjective phrases so that the performers freely choose their actions. For example, "play as if the sound tells something". These verbal commands allow for general indications, which can sometimes seem surreal or incoherent, and are intended to generate new material by making the most of the agent's interpretation, in line with the aforementioned ASC (Creative Semantic Anchoring) rubric. These phrases consider the individual actions of the agents that can specifically contribute to the flexibility of the work. We can consider two perspectives for this approach:

1. Highly delimited motor responses – "play until the sound says nothing more" – in this context, "play until" is easily understood and generates relatively quick responses. Therefore, it also serves as a guideline applicable to "laypersons".[12]
2. Subjective or unforeseen responses – "the sound says nothing more". Here, a singular moment is suggested to the individual who will produce the action. There is no predetermination of right and wrong (as in 1).

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12   Our interest for such a composite and, indeed, poorly described social group roots in Milton Babbitt's well-known essay *Who Cares if You Listen?* (1998 [1958]), and needs to be understood as a critique of the more or less overt elitism incorporated in some narratives of musical creative practice. In an openly polemical move, we decided to keep using the adjective "lay" with reference to Babbitt's exhaustive mention of the "layman", despite the fact that we find the term highly charged and stereotyped.

When playing *Ouija*, the performers must turn off their microphones, keeping the cameras on, in a way that they cannot hear the partner's sounds but can (and should) see his/her gesture performance. A pre-recorded track is heard by the instrumentalists to establish a minimum common ground between the participants.

The experiment featured two online sessions on the Zoom platform. The total duration of each session was 15 minutes, with 5 minutes of musical performance and 10 minutes of discussion about the session. The participants had access to a score and a pre-recorded track. However, no prior practice or preparation with the *Ouija* project materials was done prior to recording.

Interviews were conducted with the two performers shortly after each session, with the aim of gathering information on the spot, focused on immediate reactions, rather than analysis or reflection at a later time when they could reconsider and reinterpret their experience (see Menezes 2010 for an alternative methodological perspective).

Results. We edited two versions of each session. One version shows how the session took place without the performers hearing each other. The second version includes the mixing of sound and visual materials used to evaluate the results.[13] In both sessions, we found moments of similar musical responses. Both technically and sonically, the interactions become integrated, giving the impression that they are performing a pre-composed process.[14] These interaction strategies are based on gestural imitation and framed by the visual information to minimize the lack of shared instrumental sonic outcomes.

Final Remarks

Within the sphere of interconnected musical practices and processes, replacing the notion of "things" with that of "stuff" leads to new perspectives on artistic, philosophical and political outcomes. This conceptual shift could eventually foster and shape future ubimus initiatives. A fixed ontology of the musical internet is supplanted by a phenomenology of ever-changing entities featured in distributed creative interactions (cf. Messina et al., forthcoming). Intensive exchanges of data, together with ongoing modifications of the creative outcomes and processes, preclude the segmentation and classification of fixed "things" in the three cases documented in this paper.

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13   Session 1 and 2 – Sound and visual mixing: https://youtu.be/2H7kMc82MpU and https://youtu.be/UksUyIgHdG4.

14   As examples, we can demonstrate in session 1: from 1:06 to 1:19 minutes, melodic counterpoint/tremolo; from 2:01 to 2:21, circular arc – spazzolato/pizzicato; from 4:06 to 4:34, pizzicato/ricochet. In session 2: from 1:07 to 1:42, melodic counterpoint; from 1:50 to 2:04, pizzicato; from 2:26 to 2:46, overpressure/glissando; from 4:11 to 4:25, pizzicato/ricochet.

Remote and collaborative patching on Kiwi from a number of different terminals, for example, yields different parameters and audio signals, as these are only kept locally. Interestingly, this usage features very different aural results on different settings due to the local infrastructure and to the specific context of the musical activity. Here the pliable nature of the dynamic and collaborative patching is expanded by the nature of the aural outcomes, different from computer to computer, from ambience to ambience, from stakeholder to stakeholder, despite coming from the very same programming structure. Applying the logic of the NFTs to this case is then very difficult, if not impossible. Where is the "real thing" advocated by Ethereum here? The patch is constantly modified, augmented, reduced and restructured by the participants, potentially providing as many audio results as there are participants. How could we possibly go about tokenizing a Kiwi patch? Which of its multiple aural manifestations should become the one and only "real thing"?

It is no coincidence that all the three cases exemplified here rely on different infrastructures for remote communications, perhaps all subsumable under the wide umbrella-term of "social networks" or "social media".[15] We would argue that *Beat Byte Bot* definitely falls within a hard definition of social media, for operating on such a widespread instant messaging tool as Telegram. The VOIP technology used in *Ouija* also falls within this category, although the adoption of VOIP tools such as Skype happened a few years before the explosion of social media/networks and the entrance of this terminology in our daily life.[16] Kiwi, on the other hand, relies on a small-scale virtual community with features of mainstream social networks. The tool, however, lacks user support through quick chat to communicate while patching. As a matter of fact, during the remote live patching experience, participants resorted to writing comments directly on the patching canvas to compensate for the lack of verbal communication.

Among the early ubimus practitioners, Miletto et al. (2018) proposed an alternative to the problem of verbal messages in remote collaborative music making: their project CODES explores precisely the concept of "social networks" as an environment for collective music making that allows for text exchanges within a collaborative-sharing thread. In fact, the establishment and nurturing

15   Van Dijck's (2013) categorization of social media distinguishes social network sites, sites for user-generated content, trading and marketing sites, and play and game sites. However, as this categorization might have been formulated some time before the mobile-platform boom, it does not take account more recent instant messaging services like Telegram and WhatsApp (cf. Sutikno et al., 2016).
16   Skype entered the market in 2003. Van Dijck (2013) indicates 2006 and 2010 as key moments in the transition towards the protagonism of social media. Edosomwan et al. (2011) focus on the period between 2005 and 2010 as a crucial and foundational period in the history of social media, despite the fact that these technologies may have been around for much longer than that.

of virtual communities is precisely one of the keys of the creative and intellectual endeavors within the Ubiquitous Music Group. Pimenta et al. (2014), for example, focus on the potential embedded in Web 2.0 applications, in terms of the creation of sharing networks for novice-oriented computer-based musical activities. Their target is to alleviate and eventually overcome the implicit restrictions of activities tailored for professional artists and trained performers. The authors, in turn, associate this to Brazilian cultural traits such as cooperation, flexibility, cross-cultural diversity and creativity. Reading these statements in the context of the political developments happening in Brazil since 2016 sharpens the contrast with the current ethical, social and environmental crises that affect this country.

Apropos politics, we need to stress, once again, that the Internet of Musical Stuff (IoMuSt) rubric is, by all means, a political proposal, that – in line with the principles that characterize ubimus – envisages interconnected virtual communities, the free exchange of intellectual and creative processes and the overcoming of paywalls, restrictions and predatory monetizations. We agree with Puckette as to the shortcomings of intellectual property, while we also subscribe non-negotiably to the principle of intellectual and authorial attribution as a necessary feature of any type of content sharing in ubimus. The whole NFT agenda seems less interested in protecting authorship than in protecting *ownership*. On the contrary, IoMuSt wishfully contemplates a collective liberation from ownership, property, monetization and paywalls in a future digital world.

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THE INTERNET OF MUSICAL STUFF (IOMUST): UBIMUS PERSPECTIVES ON ARTIFICIAL SCARCITY, VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES AND (DE)OBJECTIFICATION (summary)

Part of the recent developments in Ubiquitous Music (ubimus) research involve the proposal of the Internet of Musical Stuff (IoMuSt) as an expansion and complement to the Internet of Musical Things (IoMusT). The transition from IoMusT to IoMuSt is mediated by a critical discussion of ontologies, whereby we may agree to the segmentation of material reality into compartmentalized elements, referred to as "things". In this sense, drawing upon a heterogeneous corpus of philosophical, linguistic and critical works, we highlight the importance of "things" in terms of personal and historical memory, language and semantics, etc. Nevertheless, we take a cue from Han's remarks on the deobjectification of the digital world, in order to reflect on the potentialities that this entails in terms of interconnected creative resources. We then rely on Puckette's critique of intellectual property, on Levinas's critique of ontology and on the shortcomings of the corporate discourse of blockchain giant Ethereum in order to stage a critique of blockchain and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) as technologies for allotment, disciplination and regimentation of formerly open and freely accessible artistic web

content. In brief, we advocate the replacement of the operative concepts constructed around "things" with strategies based on "stuff", a move that highlights the underlying interconnected processes and factors that impact interaction and usage, pointing to resources that become disposable and valueless within an objectified and monetized musical internet. Things are vulnerable to the imposition of hegemonic territorialities and are subject to reification, objectification and – in the context of blockchain and NFTs – monetization. Contrastingly, stuff is pliable, it is fairly amorphous, it changes with usage, it relies on context to acquire meaning, it may be persistent or volatile depending on the demands of the stakeholders, it supports handling through flexible temporalities, it incorporates value through sharing and it adapts to non-hierarchical territorialities. This conceptual and methodological turn allows us to deal with distributed-creativity phenomena in marginalized spaces, highlighting the role of resources that are widely reproducible, fluid and ever-changing. In this paper, we address IoMuSt-based responses to issues such as the artificial production of scarcity associated with the application of NFTs. The selected musical examples showcase the meshwork of dynamic relationships that characterizes ubimus research. In particular, we focus on: (1) *Beat Byte Bot*, developed by Gil Panal and Luís Arandas, a Telegram-based tool for web-based audio management that draws upon several features of chatbots to create volatile and collaborative user-generated audio databases; (2) a set of intercontinental real-time live patching sessions between Brazil (Federal University of Paraíba and Federal University of Acre) and France (University Paris 8), enabled by Kiwi, an online tool for audio-based collaborative visual programming; (3) *Ouija* by Luzilei Aliel, a comprovisation project involving VOIP visual communication through Skype, Meet and Zoom, and a set of musical experiments enabled by an online tool for remote live patching. We conclude by reflecting on the new artistic, philosophical and political perspectives that are opened by the replacement of the notion of "things" with that of "stuff" in digital settings.

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TIKTOK AND SOUND: CHANGING THE WAYS OF CREATING, PROMOTING, DISTRIBUTING AND LISTENING TO MUSIC[1]

Abstract: TikTok has become one of the fastest growing online empires in the last decade, and one of the most influential social media tools today. By centering the short-video format tailored for smartphone screens, this platform sets forth the sonic component of the audio-visual material in ways which have been unexplored in the social media realm on a global scale before. In this article I will explore the ways in which TikTok has made an "aural turn" (Abidin and Kaye 2021), and thus changed and influenced the processes of music-making, music listening and music promotion. Special attention is given to the tools creators have at use (such as Duets, Stitches, livestreams, short form of the video), as well as the circumstances that ensue when these tools are combined with the algorithm and the entire ecosystem of this app (such as the highest yet possibility of virality, pressure to optimize content to be 'catchy' and likable, fast release on other streaming apps). The article also investigates the TikTok-influenced image of the contemporary music industry, as well as the multifaceted use of sound as memes.

INTRODUCTION

With its breakneck rise in popularity come the pandemic and the times of isolation – as one of the top 10 most downloaded apps in the last decade (Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin 2022, 884), one of the fastest growing brands in 2020 and 2021 (Morning Consult), the most popular website of 2021 (Cloudfire), and the "official entertainment partner" of the Eurovision Song Contest 2022 – TikTok was seemingly only an app intriguing just to teenagers eager to participate in dance challenges. Overcoming the expectations and the patronizing discourse surrounding it, this platform has, in fact, changed the ways in which we consume, create, and interact with audiovisual content in just a couple of years. Moreover, it has vastly transformed the ways in which we experience music, including the perspectives of the creator, the audience, and the music industry/ traditional mediator between the first two.

In his introductory chapter to the edited collection *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, Trevor Boffone frames "TikTok as what Raymond Williams calls a 'formal innovation,' or new cultural practices that push against well-established mainstream culture" (2022, 3). The innovations and cultural impact introduced by this platform are discernable in several key features. To start, content creation on TikTok is best described by the terms produsage or prosumerism – the types of participation in online environments which transcend the division between passive consumption and active creation of content.[2] TikTok 'produsers', more commonly known as TikTokers, engage with this digital ecosystem in a noticeably more casual, immediate and intuitive way than seen on other social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram or YouTube, which, on the other hand, developed a more polished and curated environment over the years. Its user-friendly interface makes it even easier to record and edit video clips, as well as react to content with video responses via options such as Duets and Stitches. Coupled with the easy-to-use aspect, the addictive quality of this app is also rooted in its powerful algorithm and enormously potent organic reach of the content. Finally, what is especially important for the present paper, the platform sets forth the sonic component of the audio-visual material in such ways which have been unexplored in social media before and on a global scale.

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2   The term produsage was popularized by Australian media scholar Alex Bruns with his book *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond: From Production to Produsage* (2009). On the other hand, prosumerism is more often use in the field of marketing, business and economy. See, for example: Buzzetto-More 2013; Santomier and Hogan 2013.

Building on the hypothesis proposed by Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú and Crystal Abidin that the "TikTok's audio background is one of its main unique features" (2022, 885), in this article I will explore the ways in which TikTok has changed and influenced the processes of music-making, music listening and music promotion, with an intention to contribute to the foundation for future research of the status and practices of music and musicians on this app. My research is based on a user experience on TikTok as a consumer who intentionally 'trained' their algorithm to show diverse types of music content, as well as on the internet sources, newspapers articles and, most importantly, already rich scholarly production that TikTok expansion provoked. Before turning to the analysis of said processes, I will give an overview of the TikTok's history and main features, with special attention given to the role of sound it fosters.

ABOUT TIKTOK

TikTok as we know it today emanated from a merger of two previously existing software, a widely popular Chinese short-form video sharing app Douyin (抖音), and Musical.ly, also a Chinese social media platform specialized for short lip-sync videos. Namely, the company ByteDance released Douyin in 2016 for the Chinese market exclusively, and acquired Musical.ly in 2017, which were then merged into one software and all the existing accounts were transferred to TikTok. With all the possibilities and the prior popularity of the two apps, Tik-Tok was launched in 2017 for the international market, and it became available worldwide on August 2, 2018.

The features mentioned before – the content creation possibilities, ease of operation, monstrous algorithm, and probability of reaching significantly larger numbers of people – also did not come without its problems and challenges. Since its beginnings, TikTok has had to deal with (or has inexplicably ignored) problems with users respecting or administrators maintaining community guidelines, censorship, cyberbullying, harassment (see Anderson 2020), promoting and upholding misogyny (Daly et al. 2022), white supremacy, racism (see Boffone 2022b; Ile 2022), xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and far-right extremism (see Weimann and Masri 2020). Likewise, issues with monetization and unregulated/insufficient payments through the Creator fund (Green 2022), addictiveness, allegations of reduced attention span in users, "dangerous" participatory challenges, data security and such, are the result of the relative 'greenness' of the platform combined with its main functioning characteristics.

On the other hand, more than one billion users and various scholars also attest to TikTok's positive and good sides. For example, Boffone underlined this ambiguity:

> TikTok is filled with joy, escapism, pleasure, education, and commu-
> nity-building, even if the platform bolsters systemic racism, classism,
> ableism, and the like. (…) TikTok can be both of these things; there is
> nuance (Boffone 2022, 6).

Coincidentally, the enormous growth of TikTok is interconnected and con-
current with the Coronavirus outbreak and the global pandemic that followed.
Its prospect for community making through the immediacy and easiness of vid-
eo communication indeed came in hand during the time of mandatory social
isolation. As the research suggests, during 2020 TikTok had a beneficial effect
on the mental health of its users (Situmorang 2021), as it became instrumental
in online learning and coping with school assignments/stress (Literat 2021), and
also helped in getting valuable – albeit not always accurate – public health in-
formation across (see Basch et al. 2020; Southwick et al. 2021; Southerton 2021).

With such an unprecedented 'boom', TikTok quickly started to influence and
enforce a shift towards a more vertical video friendly environment for the al-
ready existing social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube,
and Twitter. Most notably, the popularity of the short video pushed by the new
app practically enforced developers at these well-established companies to in-
troduce a new feature – Reels on Instagram in August 2020[3] and Shorts on You-
Tube in September 2020. This reorientation has received different reactions:
while many Instagram users lament this new focus on the video instead of the
photographs that were the trademark of this app, the YouTube realm started
to introduce a new perspective into their website in order to more organically
incorporate the new content tool. Namely, as internet content creator, science
communicator and entrepreneur Hank Green explained, with having both You-
Tube videos and YouTube shorts, this website becomes a place where you can
decide whether to watch something (a video from a creator one is familiar with
and already subscribed to) or to keep watching something (a TikTok-like thread
of short videos from random creators you do not follow) (Green 2022b).

However, the appeal of short video content remains primarily a TikTok fea-
ture. The still unmatchable algorithm is the characteristic feature that separates
it from its peers and the previously existing apps TikTok is often being com-
pared to (such as Vine, Snapchat, and others). As Bhandari and Bimo point out,
Tikok is the only one "of the major social media platforms on the market (…)
to position its algorithm at the center of the social experience it engenders; the
algorithm determines the type of video content the user is exposed to" (2022, 2).
Therefore, the user experience is led and determined by algorithm, which is it-

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3   Company Meta, which owns both Instagram and Facebook, also launched Reels on
Facebook in September 2021 for the US market and in February 2022 globally.

self a 'quick learner' of one's interests and favorite topics. Spending most of their time consuming new content (especially on the dominant, exploratory "For You Page"), TikTokers are aware of the algorithms 'ability' to quickly and accurately 'read' them and customize the content to their liking – often in the most uncanny ways – and the fact that it affects the longitude of time they spend on the app (Bhandari and Bimo 2022, 5). One is thus able not only to introduce and virtually establish oneself via the direct content production, but also – thanks to the fact that, unlike on other popular social media platforms, TikTok profiles are inherently public – to build the "algorithmized self" (Bhandari and Bimo 2022) through the never-ending stream of videos coming their way.

"MAKE THIS A SOUND": AUDIO COMPONENT OF TIKTOK

The importance and even prevalence of sound on TikTok has been stressed on many occasions. What differentiates the audio component here is the possibility of using sound as a 'ready-made' element and a base for memes. This includes both released songs and musical pieces, as well as the audio content recorded by the users.[4] Namely, the option to "make a sound", whether separately or by extracting it from your already existing video, opened a possibility of becoming viral based on the unproduced and 'raw' sound – be it music, speech, sound effects, or other.

Aside from using *a sound* as a foundation to one's video in a dance or other challenges, memes, lip-syncing, reactions or as a 'mood setter', TikTok thrives off the already mentioned features Duet and Stitch, which further creates the possibilities of working with sound on the app. Both of these options can be seen as the successors of two features of the app Musical.ly – BFF and Q&A. Musical.ly's "Best Fan Forever", i.e., BFF feature,[5] made it possible for two users to connect their accounts and create separate videos with the same background music template, and combine it into one video (Savic 2021, 3184). However, this feature did not support adding more audio layers to the original, since "it was introduced as a way to dance or lip-sync alongside others (Musical.ly 2017)" (Kaye 2022). On the other hand, Q&A enabled users to answer posed video questions with video answers.

With TikTok's takeover of Musical.ly, the latter feature was eliminated, and the BFF was "rebranded" (Savic 2021, 3184). However, I would argue that although the Q&A might be officially cancelled, the core idea still exists and func-

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4   Often, when viewers of a certain video realize the "meme potential" of the sound that video contains, there will be a flood of comments in line with "make this a sound" sentiment.
5   Also dubbed by the preteen users of the app as the Best Friends Forever feature.

tions through the Stitch feature, where one user is able to answer to a video, and have it play after the whole fragmented/edited original. The Duet and Stitch features have, therefore, allowed for different types of manipulation of sound in communication to other users' content, whether it be layering or continuance on the existing sound. As I will show later in this text, these two options, together with an option of creating an original sound, shaped the way music is made, reacted and listened to, as well as promoted on TikTok and even beyond.

Making music / working with sounds

In this subsection of the text, I will look further into the characteristics of TikTok that are instrumental for creation of music in this app, both in terms of the software's technical features and concerning the environment that the users create on this platform. In other words, the attention is given to the tools creators have at use (such as Duets, Stitches, livestreams, short form videos), as well as the circumstances that ensue when these tools are combined with the algorithm and the entire ecosystem of this app (such as the highest yet possibility of virality on social media, pressure to optimize content, make it 'catchy' and likable, release it on other streaming apps such as Spotify).

The already mentioned Duet feature was, as expected, "immediately appealing" to musicians (Kaye 2022, 60). The possibility of combining your sound with another creator's sound to create a new blend would obviously be interesting to musicians, especially during times of social isolation.[6] This type of collaborative music making can – and it most often does – happen between the previously mutually unfamiliar users, at least in the professional sense. It should also be noted that many TikTokers – particularly those who strive towards the best possible internet and social media presence and presentation – record, layer and mix the sound of their Duets within the separate musical software, and then use that file instead of the 'organic' sound of Duet.

One initial video and every consequent recording that is created in this queue can, theoretically, in continuation have a countless number of different duets and, therefore, a countless number of sound outcomes. The first video is a "call-to-action" of a kind, an invitation to everyone who feels intrigued to answer (musically or otherwise). For choir singers, it can be the bass singing its part of the SATB arrangement of a choral piece, or, for virtual bands, any of the instruments playing the line of a well-known song or an improvisation. The

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6   For example, D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye explored the collaborative music making on TikTok during the first several months of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, through the case study of @JazzTokOfficial profile. See Kaye 2022.

building of virtual choirs, which became widely popular with the work of American composer Eric Whitacre,[7] was now possible without tedious montage and individual recordings that had to be edited into one; choirs, as well as any other vocal, vocal-instrumental, or purely instrumental ensemble, started forming without clear guidance, one sound layer at a time.

One attention-worthy example of such collaborative music making started uncovering in late 2020 with a video of Scottish postman and folk singer Nathan Evans. Namely, Evans recorded a cover of "Wellerman", a sea shanty (a type of song originally performed by seamen aboard merchant ships and fishing ships since the 1400s, cf. Parr 2021) and posted it on his profile on December 27, 2020. The video itself frames Evans sitting in front of the camera (see Figure 1), lip-syncing to a prerecorded sound that contains Evans singing acapella, with multiple vocal tracks added in the chorus of the song and steady beat of his hand hitting on the table.

Soon after, the TikTok was taken away with numerous Duets to this cover, making it viral together with the hashtags #seashanty and #seashantytiktok.[8] Almost instant virality, numerous duets to this video, remixes of his sound, and many subsequent covers and original songs by Evans propelled his career and led him to a three single contract with Polydor Records, of which "Wellerman" was officially released already on January 22, 2021.[9]

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7   The first instance of Whitacre's virtual choir – Virtual Choir 1 *Lux Aurumque* – was launched on YouTube in March 2010. See more on the history of this long-lasting project on Eric Whitacre's website (https://ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir) and his YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@virtualchoir).

8   At the moment of finishing this article, #seashanty hashtag had 6.9 billion views on TikTok, while #seashantytiktok had over 430 million. Google Trends also underlined the virality of this trend by announcing on January 12, 2021, that the term "sea shanties" as a search term reached its highest point in Google's history (Parr 2021).

9   In 2022, Nathan Evans released an album titled *Wellerman – The Album* with the label Electrola. The album contains 14 Evans' renditions of shanties, as well as the two remixes of "Wellerman" and "Drunken Sailor". See more at: https://www.discogs.com/release/25170967-Nathan-Evans-Wellerman-The-Album.
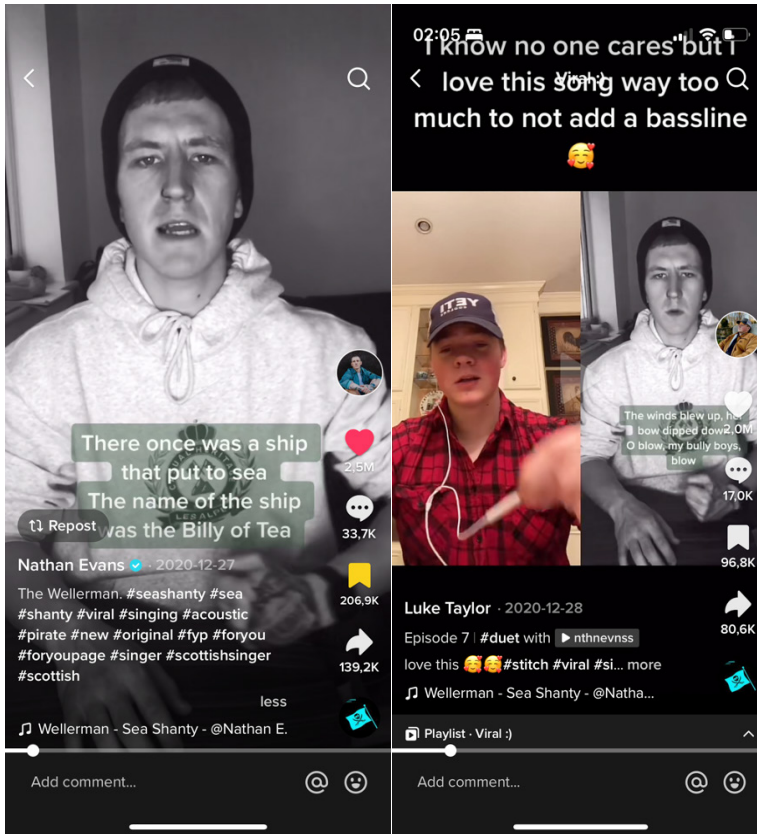
Figure 1. Screenshots of Nathan Evans's video and one viral duet by American singer Luke Taylor.

The story of "Wellerman" is among many examples of inspiring and reaction-provoking original videos. With various levels of success, many people post their invitation to collaboration into the TikTok void. These "Sing/Play with me" videos span from invitation to make Duets to cover already famous songs, to instigation of improvisatory collaborations. American singer Patrick Smith (@ pat.smith85), for example, combines these two: aside from clips of him singing and playing covers or his original music, Smith also records TikToks inviting viewers to duet his videos and sing covers in a jazzy manner. He also includes a visual component, adding on screen the song's text, which is divided into verses that are supposed to be sung by him and his virtual partner alternately. Going further, a genre of the "open verse challenge" has developed, where musicians of various genres give an opportunity to their followers to duet their music video and 'fill in the missing parts' of their new songs on their own, textually and musically.

On the other hand, one of the possible approaches to Duets and outcomes thereof is also described and examined by D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye in his al-

ready mentioned paper about the @JazzTokOfficial profile (2022). Kaye under-lines the advantages (finding the community, doing jazz challenges, promoting music, inviting the audience to participate via the Duet feature) and disadvantages (having to outsource final editing of videos to another platform, for example) of having a musical community and shared profile during the period of Covid-19 lockdowns.

An intriguing inter-species trend also gained massive popularity. Namely, since pet and animal videos make up a large portion of TikTok and internet content in general, it is not surprising that musicians started "duetting" animals producing musically inspiring sounds. An account that collected over 11 million likes on his videos with "musical duets with animals", @hirokisan79, belongs to the Japanese composer and arranger Hiroki Takashi. In these videos, he makes an arrangement of an already existing musical piece or a song or composes something completely new, based on the sound that the animal makes in the original video (the sound can be of animals' voicing or of some other recorded animal activity).[10]
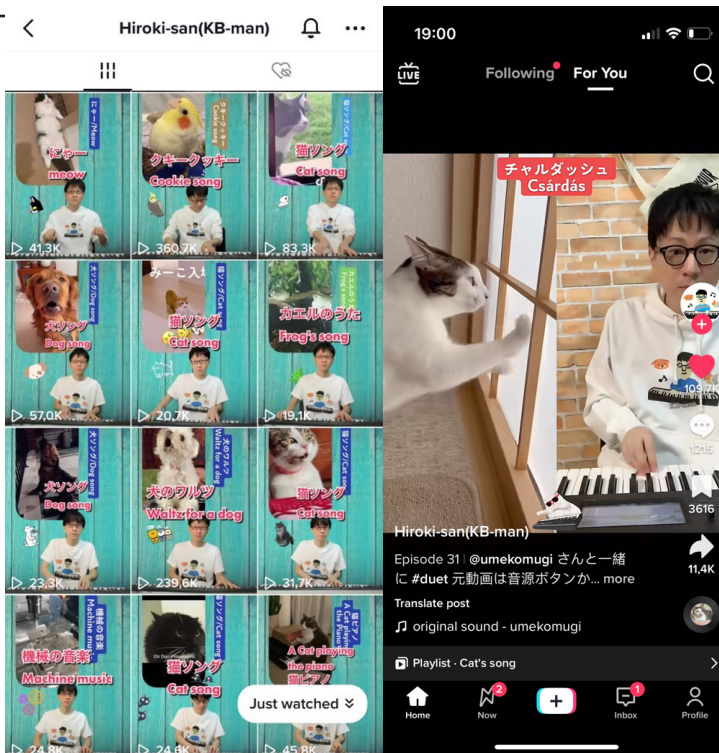

Figure 2. Screenshots of Hiroki Takashi's page and the *Csárdás* video.

10   For example, one of his most viewed and liked recent videos shows a cat scratching a door in a consistent and regular beat that could suit a tempo of a quicker musical piece. Duetting that video and sound, Takashi played Vittorio Monti's *Csárdás*. See also Figure 2. https://vm.tiktok. com/ZMFxnyrYT/ .

With the Stitch feature, a direct musical collaboration (as seen with Duets) is unlikely, mainly because there is no option to add sound to the original post or layer tracks of sound when stitching a video. Furthermore, the stitched video is only up to five seconds long. This means that the video that is used for further stitching is meant/made to be a provocateur of a reaction. The user that is stitching a video can also choose which part of the video they are going to react to; in that reasoning, one could enable the Stitch option on their videos, and invite people to sing, play or react to a musical performance in their own video with the words "stitch this with a video of…". However, this feature is not primarily used in the musical community for virtual music making, but mostly for verbal or other answers to the original poster. For example, user @theneedletok stitched with a video by @moshpitjones, reacting to a sentence "all the music sounds the same". In their answer, TheNeedleTok gave several examples of music artists and albums to listen to that could possibly change the original poster's mind.[11]

Musicians on TikTok can also benefit from the livestream feature, even though this software trait is not limited to TikTok users. Nevertheless, TikTok livestreams appear on the "Following" page and on the "FYP", reaching their already existing followers, as well as potential new listeners. In their detailed guidelines for creators, TikTok highlights what the "best practices to keep in mind" are when going live: prime time hours, the duration of a livestream, lighting, active engagement with the audience, good quality of sound and internet connection, etc. (TikTok 2022). The host of a livestream can now also have up to five guests on their stream, however, given the different locations, stability of internet connection and delays in communication, this feature is not ideal for collaborative music making. On the other hand, a virtual gig-like atmosphere can be achieved if a video/gig is streamed from one place.

There are, of course, other examples of concert streaming coming from the big production companies. In 2021, the famous Lotte Duty Free Family Concert was streamed on TikTok, and it featured major K-Pop star bands such as BTS, Super Junior D&E, TWICE, ITZY, and TOMORROW x TOGETHER. Prior to this, The Lotte Duty Free company organized many successful online events with tickets and an "online gate", however, this was one of the first of its kind on TikTok. In June 2022, Italian band Måneskin – the ESC 2021 winners and a global sensation ever since – played and streamed a free concert from Berlin without the live audience as a gift to their fans.

Turning to the issue of the duration and the obligatory dimensions of TikTok videos, there are several aspects that should be considered. Namely, although TikTok elongated the videos up to 10 minutes since August 2021 (for some users), the platform is best known and used for videos lasting from 15 seconds to

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11   See: https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMFxvJxPT/.

one minute and, more recently, even up to three minutes. This demand for short videos that grab the viewer's and listener's attention within the first few seconds hugely influenced the ways of presenting musical pieces on this app and, consequently, even on the music writing itself. As Robert Prey (2020) and Jeremy Wade Morris (2020) underlined, music artists can nowadays feel compelled to 'optimize' their work in terms of songwriting and song production to increase their visibility on platforms, most notably, on Spotify. Morris further points out that

> music, as data, adds pressure on musicians and producers to think and act like software developers, treating their music not just as songs that need to reach listeners, but as an intermingling of sonic content and coded metadata that needs to be prepared and readied for discovery (Morris 2020, 2).

Although Morris and Prey write about different internet music platforms, this statement especially rings true for musicians and music promoters on TikTok.

If we take into account the sounds that are the drivers for the duration of the videos – be it as a meme or as a musical excerpt – we can see that, thanks to the initial setting to the video duration, the majority of them last from just several seconds up to one minute. A request – or, rather, a limit – like that can most certainly influence the way we listen to existing music, but also the way we compose new music intended for large audiences and uses. It has almost become an unwritten rule to think about and project a verse, chorus, or a bridge of a song, which could fit the ideal duration, be appropriated into meme or otherwise trending sound, and have a potential to go viral.[12] Together with becoming a meme, releasing a sound excerpt from a song that is soon to be published on music streaming platforms is likewise being used as a hook. A recent example of a highly viral sound that has led to a global anticipation of the full song release happened in Summer/Fall 2022. Sam Smith's and Kim Petras' song "Unholy" was teased on TikTok with an excerpt from the song that featured the chorus on August 22, 2022, becoming an instant viral hit. The release was scheduled for September 15 but had to be postponed to September 22 because of Queen Elisabeth II's passing and funeral. Even though the song performed extremely well in charts, its release date delay sparked a fiery debate on the fast-paced TikTok about the music industry and big production companies who do not yet realize

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12   Recently, many have pointed out that even the biggest pop music stars have not been immune to this trend. One of the most notable examples of such practice is the already famous sound meme "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me" from Taylor Swift's latest album *Midnight* (2022). See, for example: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/love-sex/anti-hero-trend-taylor-swift-tiktok-b2227478.html.

they need to act faster in a world or on an app where trending songs change in a matter of days of weeks.

What can also influence the type of presentation of musicians and their work besides the duration are the dimensions, and the obligatory upright position of the captured frame, designed to best take advantage of people's smartphones. That means that just copying and pasting horizontally recorded videos that were made for platforms such as YouTube can be seen as lazy and unwilling to commit to a TikTok audience.

As implied previously in the text, TikTok is not an application tailored for listening to music and collecting songs into playlists, although verified musicians and bands have a special section of their profiles to separate sounds from the video content. It is, thus, crucial for music artists to know how to use their popularity 'take-off' on TikTok and recognize when to release viral or otherwise successful songs on other music streaming apps. TikTok gives an opportunity for fast organic growth and a virality based on the sound itself, and can thus streamline and propel many potential music careers.

Promoting music / pipeline to *the real* music industry

As early as Spring 2020, the instructions of how to achieve virality of TikTok with your music started to appear. For example, in their YouTube video titled "TikTok Music Promotion | How To Get Your Music Viral In 24 Hours", music marketing agency Burstimo based in London shared possible promotion strategies for musicians on TikTok. The presenter gives two approaches: one for those who want to engage in TikTok produsage themselves, and the other for those who would rather delegate that task (Burstimo 2020).

According to the first strategy, apart from creating and recording music, a musician must actively work on gathering a like-minded community, creatively present to them the music and details about the creation process, explain the meaning of the songs, and, finally, reach out to influencers on the platform with propositions for collaboration. The other route of promoting music on TikTok presumes a musician has analyzed and divided their songs into shorter (15 seconds or so) clips, and then reached out to influencers who could produce a viral dance challenge or other trend based on the sound. Burstimo supposes the music is already made independently of social media before acting on these steps, but, as I have emphasized above, that is not always the case, and this strategy of actively thinking about the next viral trend very much influences the creative process.

More recently, in 2022 marketing platforms for music professionals such as Feature.fm introduced a feature titled "evergreen pre-save" (Feature.fm 2022; Leight 2022). This option would allow musicians who become viral with an excerpt from a new and unreleased song to see how much of their audience would engage in "pre-saving" the release (of known or unknown date) and demonstrate their interest by leaving TikTok, i.e., the initial platform, with a click to the external link. Simultaneously, the marketing agency would gather more information about the fans by collecting their email and other data.

Much has already been said in the media about TikTok virality and the right moves for aspiring musicians when they achieve it. In their extensive research of new and emerging musical artists that became viral with their new releases on TikTok in the period from 2020 to 2021, journalists Estelle Caswell from Vox and Matt Daniels from The Pudding explored the 'behind the scenes', or the follow-up on the 'happily ever after' of TikTok virality and the influence of that particular type of virality on music culture and the music business (see Caswell and Daniels 2022). The first thing to note was the already mentioned and so-called "TikTok-to-Spotify pipeline", followed by dissecting the network of record labels, distributors, independent artists, and their formulas for success in the now-significantly-changed music business. Namely, in addition to the demand of TikTok users in terms of releasing the music on Spotify, the journalists also analyzed the names on the Spotify 200 new artists playlist, only to discover that the quarter of them (in said period) came from TikTok, of which 46% signed a major record deal (Caswell and Daniels 2022). Additionally, the overall number of artists who got signed by a major label from January 2020 to December 2021 is impressive: out of the 367 in total, 129 happened as a result of a TikTok viral moment (Caswell and Daniels 2022, 13:58).

Successful (self-)promotion on TikTok leads musicians into the arms of the readily available and ever-watching eye of the music industry. The mindset that is comprised within these couple of lines – "if you want exposure, you have to be on TikTok. And not only that – you have to post, post, post" (Caswell and Daniels 2022) – inevitably directs musicians to a point where they can decide whether to sign a deal with a record label, go independent, or do something else. With the labels monitoring trends on TikTok, this platform also started developing its own tools for music distribution. TikTok's own music distribution platform, SoundOn, was launched on March 9, 2022. Like other similar platforms, SoundOn distributes music to various streaming services (Spotify, Apple Music, Resso /by ByteDance/, Deezer, Pandora, Joox, as well as back to TikTok), leading TikTok into another branch of the music business.

In a seemingly post-Covid world, apart from internet platforms and applications a music artist should be able to 'go into the real world', that is, to go on tours, sell merchandise, and secure their career in that way as well. An

Figure 3. Screenshot of the Caswell's and Daniels' video showing the proportion of artists discovered on TikTok compared to others.

illustrious example of translating the TikTok fame into the "real life" is the story of Sam Ryder, a British singer who got famous on the app with his enchanting covers of popular music classics. In 2022, Ryder represented the United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest, placing first in jury votes and second overall. What followed were the released singles, album announcement, concerts and collaborations with many established artists and, most notably, his performance with Queen members Brian May and Roger Taylor at a tribute concert for Taylor Hawkins at London's Wembley Stadium in September 2022. Ryder's example is not an exception – indeed, during 2022, many of the musicians who firstly became famous on TikTok started actively touring and engaging in concert activities.

As for the previously acclaimed musicians and their work, most of them (and their social media teams) discovered TikTok as yet another platform to promote and spread their music. Likewise, having in mind the soundtracks of the new films or television series, evergreen songs such as Kate Bush's "Running up that Hill" (included in season 4 of the *Stranger Things* series) came to the center of attention of a global audience and, among other benefits of reviving and re-releasing songs from decades ago, easily achieved TikTok virality.

Consuming / using / listening to music

Up until this point in the text, the prominence of sound on TikTok was emphasized in various ways, primarily from the perspective of musicians and the music industry. Now I will deal with the place and role sound and music have in users' experience on this app.

When speaking about the sound library on TikTok, in the moment of writing and revising this text, the number of commercially available, royalty free songs is beyond 600,000 (TikTok 2022b). This means that there are thousands more sounds available for non-commercial use, while the number of existing sounds which are not songs or song excepts in a traditional way is countless and ever-growing. Understandably, a large majority of those sounds will never be reused or become viral, but the ones that do usually become globally recognized sound memes. Having that in mind, the potential for user creative engagement is enormous.

An independent website Tokboard collects and analyzes data from TikTok, providing insight into the most popular sounds and users on the platform.[13] On their page, Tokboard presents the top 100 most used sounds in a weekly or monthly overview, coupled with their individual statistics: the author, the number of views they accumulated, and the number of popular videos made with the sound (see Figure 4). This statistics also show the speed with which TikTok songs come in and out of trend.

Looking into screenshots presented in Figure 4, we can see that the viral sound pool consists of well-known pop music songs, classical music, remixes, and original sounds created by authors for TikTok in order to provide mood-based background music or a soundtrack of any kind. It is also quite noticeable that the titles of the sounds are not given according to some rule or norm – for example, in August 2020, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (recording of Pachelbel Chamber Orchestra) was trending under the title of "Classical Music".

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13   In their About section, Tikboard says: "Tokboard is powered by a data-collection engine which is constantly fetching data from the TikTok platform. The database now contains data points for more than 80 million top videos and 5 million users, taking up more than 50 gigabytes for metadata alone. As TikTok is extremely large, we cannot pull 100% of its data but instead keep a subset of the popular videos for top sounds. As a result, the play counts we display should be thought of as a close lower bound (we estimate the videos which we index account for more than 96% of the total play counts)". Tikboard also pointed out they were being threatened by ByteDance while having their previous name, Tiktometer. See https://tokboard.com/about. Last accessed on November 29, 2022.
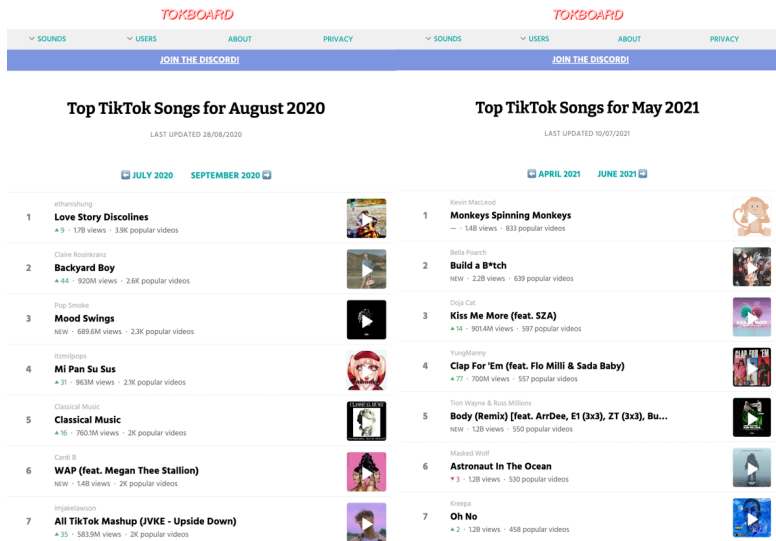
Figure 4. *Screenshots of Tokboard statistics for August 2020 and May 2021.*

This array of sounds represents the audio library primarily used as a meme or working by the principles of audio memes. Whether they are memes in a strict sense, lip-syncing or challenges based on a sound, they all set sound as the driving force and an impetus for every video reiteration and recreation of the sound. Using the term 'audio memes' to denote this phenomenon Crystal Abidin and D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye write:

> TikTokers often rely on the lyrics of specific songs to tell a story (e.g. when the lyrics are central to lip syncing, when the punchline of a video is a specific lyrical line in the song); consider the musical and rhythmic shape of a tune to advance the storyline of their video (e.g. when a beat 'drops', when a song transitions to 'bad recorder playing'); complement or juxtapose audio memes against video content and textual captions (e.g. song to provide ambience for the storytelling, song to change the tonality of storytelling to sarcasm or parody); or organize and streamline content into specific silos (2021, 58).

Furthermore, Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú and Crystal Abidin pose that the notion of music challenge, which is an extremely popular and diverse 'game' based on the sound used, can be seen as audio meme modes of (transmedia) storytelling (2022, 901). They discern many different types of these challenges: recognizing playlists; checking playlists; comparing musical recognition level; recognizing speed; checking the fandom level; remembering/forgetting songs; knowing or not knowing a song; following the rhythm; belonging to a group; singing songs; testing citizenship; lowering hand fingers; listening to any song (i.e., recognizing songs of any genre); checking addiction to TikTok; reacting/

not reacting to music; looking for friendship; showing the mood; lip-syncing skillfully; and testing musical skill (Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin 2022, 900). Combined with the gamification of sound, these challenges produce group affiliation codes and the sense of belonging (Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin 2022). We can acknowledge that some types of challenges overlap, such as testing citizenship and lowering hand fingers, which can, for example, be counted as song recognition exercises in general.

Abidin and Kaye (2021) explore the "earworm" quality of the sound together with their "templatability". This means that the sounds have a special quality to entertain and occupy the human brain and psyche as no other form of content, which has led to the "aural turn" in memes on TikTok (Abidin and Kaye 2021, 61).

The sound template, as a frame in which a meme is to happen, provokes millions of videos on TikTok. One of the latest viral trends on the app was the remixed sound titled "It's Corn", which, in the original version, contains an interview of a boy Tariq talking about his love for corn for Recess Therapy.[14] This initial sound was then "songified" – made into song – by The Gregory Brothers, a.k.a. Schmoyoho.[15] Soon enough, the song became a viral meme where people showed their appreciations to corn and, even more so, different types of things of their own liking (by showing it in the videos and adding changed lyrics to the
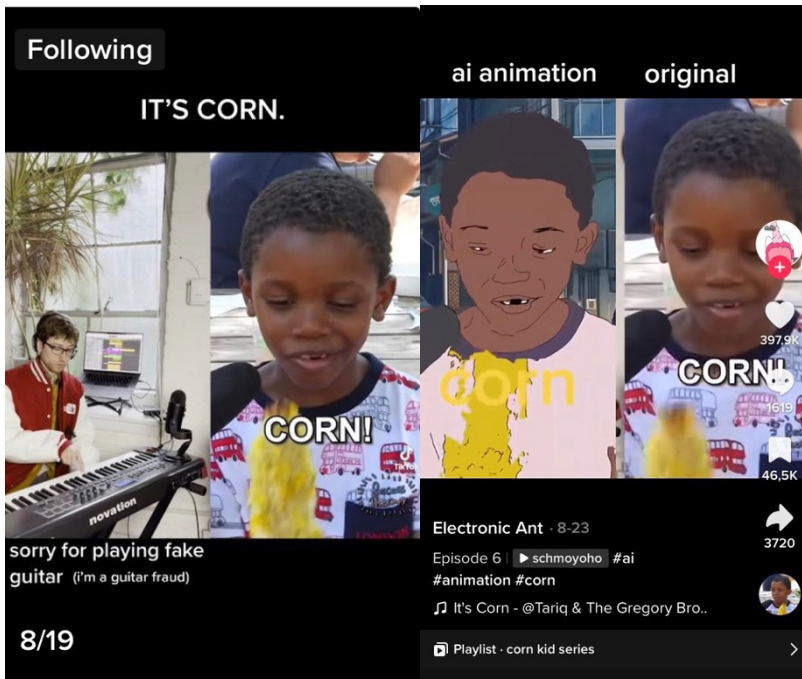
14   See video recording of the interview here: https://youtu.be/1VbZE6YhjKk.
15   Hear the TikTok viral version of the song here: https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMFQ4X24j/, and the complete song here: https://youtu.be/_caMQpiwiaU. It is important to note that Schmoyoho released the song and had the royalties split with the original creator, Tariq.

screen). The song started an avalanche of covers, duets, stitches, remixes and reactions, also entering the musical repertoires of radios, choirs, bands and other performers globally. It is worth noting that this is just one of many examples of such a reach for a TikTok sound meme.
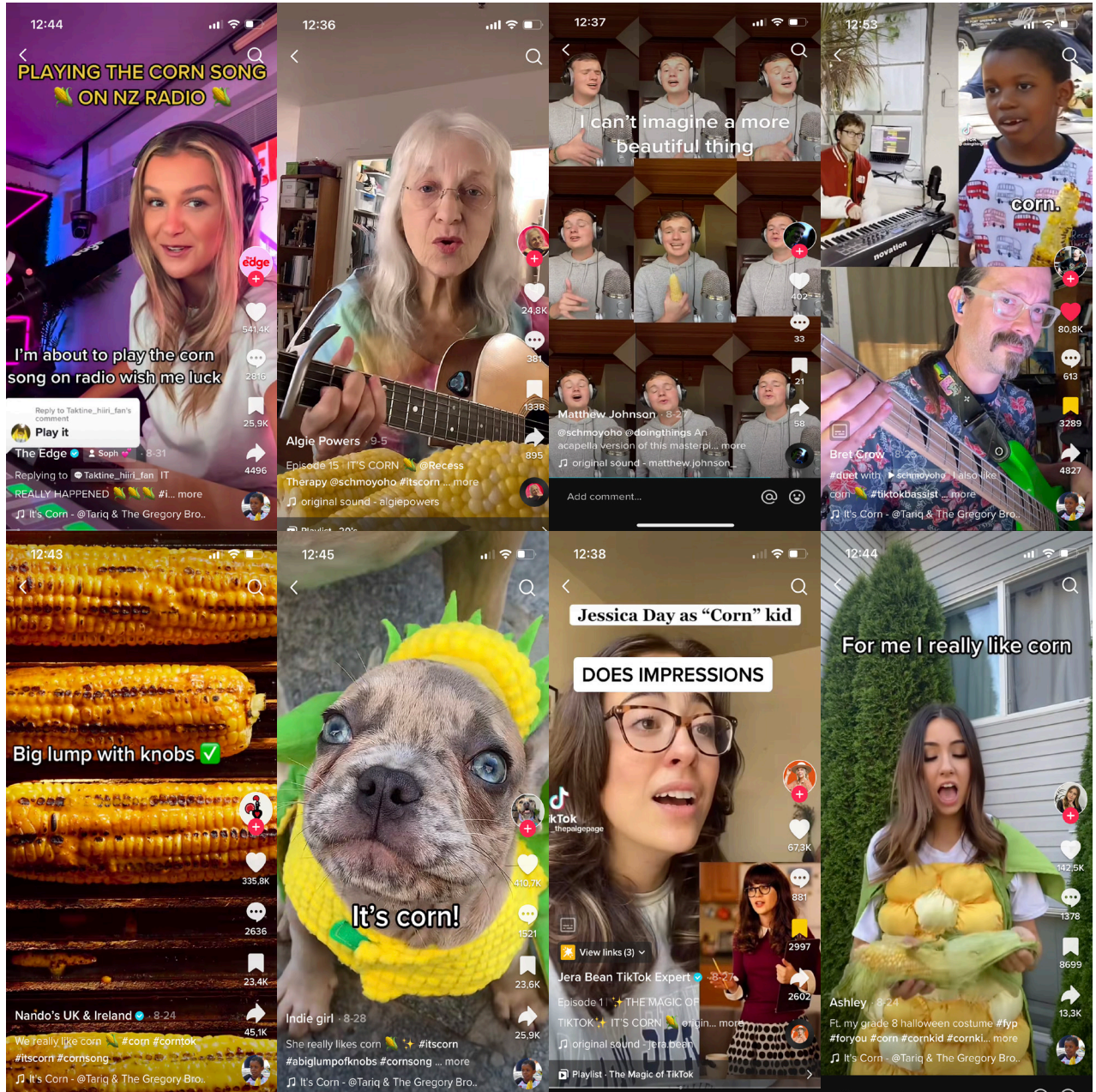

Figure 5. It's Corn original and covers/reactions screenshots.

The potential that sounds have on TikTok sparked an occurrence of TikTok coaches who specialize in recognizing current and future viral sounds. These accounts then themselves strive towards virality while "coaching" people on ways to use a specific sound. Practically, in stating the obvious for the majority of TikTok users, these creators find their own audience, but mostly just 'ride the wave' of a sound that is about to be or is already trending.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By focusing on sound on TikTok in this article, as well as on music in its many realities on this app, my intention is to contribute to the scholarly literature on this topic that is growing at a fast pace. Thus, I made an overview of the history of the app, as well as its main features, technology-wise, that allowed for sound to become so prominent. It should not be surprising that this "aural turn", which happened on such a large scale and among so many people that consume content on TikTok, strongly affected the processes of contemporary music making, the state of the music industry and the habits of today's listeners and consumers of music and sound in general. Likewise, it should come as no surprise that TikTok not only directly impacted the development of new, imitational features on the biggest social media and video sharing outlets, but also changed the way the music industry functions in terms of discovering new artists, as well as distributing, streaming, and selling music.

The *sound* has become a currency on TikTok, a driving force and a shape holder for the communication of trends, memes, challenges, group belonging, and setting new pathways in music. As I pointed out, the Duet feature – and, in particular, its option to use and layer on to the sound of the original video – is one of the primary game-changers of online musicking. It enabled collaborative music making online with limited editing skills, which became essential during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also widely argued that the form (in terms of dimensions as well as the duration) of TikTok videos, coupled with the promised and always-already achieved virality, is also shaping the way musicians structure, compose, and arrange their new pieces, songs and *sounds*. Sounds that show potential and align with the algorithm (or are promoted by influencers – as the marketing industry suggested) soon enough gain traction and aim towards virality. And when the sound becomes viral, the rest is history… until the next trend.

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TIKTOK AND SOUND:
CHANGING THE WAYS OF CREATING, PROMOTING, DISTRIBUTING AND LISTENING TO MUSIC
(summary)

This article addresses the issue of sound and music on TikTok, one of the fastest growing online empires in the last decade and one of the most influential social media tools today. By centering the short-video format tailored for smartphone screens, this platform sets forth the sonic component of the audio-visual material in ways which have been unexplored in the social media realm on a global scale before.

The "aural turn" (Abidin and Kaye 2021) that happened on TikTok at the same time changed and influenced the processes of music-making, music listening and music promotion. Special attention is given to the tools creators have at use (such as Duets, Stitches, livestreams, short form of the video) – which were especially important for collaborative music making and communication during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown – as well as the circumstances that ensue when these tools are combined with the algorithm and the entire ecosystem of this app (such as the highest yet possibility of virality, pressure to optimize content to be 'catchy' and likable, fast release on other streaming apps). The article also investigates the TikTok-influenced image of the contemporary music industry, as well as the multifaceted use of sound as memes. As shown here, TikTok not only directly impacted the development of new, imitational features

on the biggest social media and video sharing outlets, but also changed the way the music industry functions in terms of discovering new artists, as well as distributing, streaming, and selling the music. Moreover, research shows that the TikTok environment shapes the way musicians structure, compose, and arrange their new pieces, songs and *sounds*.

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SPACE CRISIS: ENCOUNTER IN THE MUSEUM BUILDING OR ONLINE?[1]

Abstract: After witnessing a huge turnaround in the wider social context in the previous period, it seems that the question of the future of museums in the digital environment has begun to take on a very optimistic tone full of potential. There is a growing visibility of these heritage institutions on social networks and an increasingly diverse offer of virtual tours, as well as the use of modern virtual and augmented reality technologies in the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage, while some works of art and collections are created exclusively for cyberspace. Nevertheless, the museum as a meeting place still seems irreplaceable. At a time of isolation, growing loneliness and fears, studies on the emotions of visitors during their stay in the museum in the last few years show that real, physical spaces of the museum encourage constructive attitudes. Encounters with other visitors as well as with the exhibited artifacts especially prove to be important for positive feelings and the need to visit the museum. We will issue these theoretical premises on selected examples and examine whether modern technologies serve as additional tools of promotion and other possible ways of presenting museum content or, oppositely, whether social media and NFT galleries manage to overcome the need for the museum itself as a place of physical encounter.

Keywords: museum space, Wunderkammer, digital art, wellbeing, heterotopia.

Spaces of the digital Wunderkammer?

Dating back to the 1960s when analogue photos were for the first time transformed into computer pixels – pieces of a graphic that when put together create a whole image – digital art started developing and has today become a widely spread medium of expression. By the end of the 20th century, digital museum presentations have been created, at the beginning on CD-ROMs, soon developing for online appearances and becoming more popular in parallel with an increase in the use of personal computers, mobile phones and gadgets (Jokanović 2020). While at first different curatorial approaches explored how to represent digital artefacts in physical gallery spaces, with the development and availability of computer technology and the Internet we have reached the moment when some collections exist only in the digital format. Moreover, one of the biggest technological disruptions of the past decade has been the rise of social media. It's estimated that in 2019 there were 3.2 billion people using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat every day. That's roughly 42% of the world's population and during pandemics these numbers are increasing dramatically. Every day the growing use of social media is more noticeable through the percentage of millennials that log into social media platforms on a regular basis (90.4%), compared to 48.2% of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964). Museums have been keen adopters of social media platforms, with institutions like MoMA, Guggenheim, Tate, and the Van Gogh Museum attracting millions of followers (Museum Next 2022). The spread in the use of social networks have influenced not only art creation but also audience participation, as well as different curatorial processes. However, even though there are many great examples of the use of online platforms and social media for art creation, heritage and art presentation, as well as many attempts to completely surpass physical exhibiting spaces and move to the vast digital environment, it seems that this media is still dominantly promotional and only sometimes digital, as when presented a collection often demands appearance in the physical space in order to immerse the audience and provoke the emotional experience.

On the other hand, the 2017 Hiscox Art Trade Report indicated that 91% of the galleries surveyed actively use social media as a promotional tool for their business, and the artists and art they exhibit. With Instagram considered by 57% of this community as the most effective social media channel, it's clear that the consumption of art is broadening outside of traditional mediums. Digital artist Chris Labrooy stated:

> It's difficult to see how one can exist without a digital presence. That's how important it is to my career. I don't think I have such a thing as an

offline fan base. Some of my most interesting projects have happened through Instagram […] It's very different to the traditional structure whereby a creative agency reaches out to an artist to produce work for a client (Artwork Archive, n.d.).

Furthermore, due to the development of digital artefact copyright protection and the online cryptocurrency trade, over the last two years a real shift in the increasing creation and presentation of digital art has occurred. Actually, the recent introduction of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and blockchain technology has for the first time enabled artists and collectors to verify the authenticity of a digital work of art. This has rapidly created a completely new trade channel in the art world but it has also raised many issues considering the quality of the content and the methodology of collecting and exhibiting these artefacts in contemporary art museums. The greatest boom occurred in 2020 when Mike Winkelmann, the digital artist Beeple, sold his digital collage for $69,346,250 at a Christie's auction. Since 2007, this artist had been creating digital artworks every single day for 13-and-a-half years, documenting the political turbulence in the USA, society's obsession with and fear of technology, personal feelings and his family events. By bringing individual works together Beeple created an impressive collage: *Everydays: the first 5000 days*:

> Minted exclusively for Christie's, the monumental digital collage was offered as a single lot sale concurrently with First Open, and realized $69,346,250. Marking two industry firsts, Christie's is the first major auction house to offer a purely digital work with a unique NFT (Non-fungible token) – effectively a guarantee of its authenticity – and to accept cryptocurrency, in this case Ether, in addition to standard forms of payment for the singular lot (Christies, n.d.).

As stated on the official channels of communication by Christie's, this auction house has never offered a new media artwork of this scale of importance before, and it was the first time it entered into blockchain and started a new chapter in art history.

The collage itself is composed out of a range of different pictures, from simple drawings to 3D models and digital depictions, covering the artist's reactions on contemporary events and colourful abstract themes. Therefore, the "Everydays" could be considered as a particular digital Wunderkammer, the creator's image of the world encompassing the selected memories from the everyday life, the imaginary beings and abstract representations of inner states and feelings.[2]

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2   For more about the meaning and models of Wunderkammer collections see Jokanović 2021.

However, even our mind is invited to wander while zooming-in on images of this monumental collage, it seems that the lack of body movement through the space and any encounter with physical objects slows down or sometimes even disables our emotional reaction. This argument will be issued through the further research in which we will get back to the origins of the concept of both the mental and physical wandering bond to the mentioned predecessors of modern museum exhibitions in the real space. It will further rely on the concept of performative heritage, which is perceived as a bodily interaction with the site in which particular space, relations and values are formed. Also, we will turn to the therapeutic potential of encounter with physically exhibited art and museum collections and visitors, which enables a displacement of a consumer into a particular fiction and is recognised as a tool for wellbeing practice. Finally, even the art market is definitely passing through a real shift and moving fast to digital spaces, and many scholars advocate for so-called *phygital* approach (Debono 2022) which would combine both the traditional and digital exhibition spaces, offering a unique transmedia communication to the audience.

Origins of museum space

Despite the proliferation of digital art and various processes of the digitization of archival and museum artefacts, as well as an increasing number of virtual collections and exhibition tours, the museum is still often identified with the space it occupies. As curator and museum theoretician, Ana Sladojević explained that space is like a semi-permeable membrane in which there is a seemingly special world, more precisely: an image of the world (Sladojević 2012). This author also based her thesis on the notion of Wunderkammer – a collection of marvellous objects characteristic of the Renaissance and Baroque Europe. Spaces formed as chambers filled with different objects of curiosity, natural species, man-made artifacts, machines and literature were aimed at contemplation, as well as representation of the identity of the owners. These piles of objects, delicately assembled and exhibited in vitrines, cabinet-shrank or various boxes, are thought to be predecessors of modern museums. Things which were gathered tended to represent the microcosms, to be tridimensional encyclopaedias of the whole world or at least of the world seen from the perspective of their creator. Revealing the melancholy of every collector who never manages to complete his collection but continues to wander and explore the world, these *islands of meaning*, although seemingly very chaotic collections, had clear criteria by which they were arranged. The juxtapositions of the objects encouraged the selected observers to wander both physically and mentally through the exhibition and revealed the attitude of the man of the early modern age towards the knowledge and understanding of the world.

The concept of wandering (inseparably physical and mental), discovering the meaning *behind* the object itself, collecting and directly studying the object in order to understand the world, is therefore characteristic of the period of creating the forerunner of today's museums, the curiosity cabinet. Therefore, such collections, together with the change of attitude towards the notion of knowledge during the Enlightenment period, are transformed into assemblies of art, technology, minerals and natural species, and other corpuses of modern museum institutions on the one hand, and spaces for experiment and scientific discovery on the other (Jokanović 2017).

Such particular worlds in small were at the same time a status symbol, an indicator of power, a testimony to distant exotic landscapes, but also the base for numerous scientific experiments. It is consequently, on the idea of summarising time and space, through the comparative existence of elements from different geographical climates and from different epochs, that the idea of a museum, descendant of the curiosity cabinet, was formed. This space is at the same time a phenomenological, cultural and ideological space, which was seemingly separated from the everyday life of space and time outside it, Sladojević will argue (2012). Often occupying chambers of the University or the Academy i.e., positions of knowledge and truth, museum spaces therefore offered an accurate and confidential view to the world. Still, even though they have been transformed and divided into much more disciplinary collections then the ones of curiosity cabinets, museum institutions are today hardly leaving the primary idea that these collections were based on, never the less if it comes to the artistic, natural collection or some other.

Thinking further in the context of the construction and spatial comprehension of the world, it is important to introduce the Foucauldian idea of heterotopia to this discussion.

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces. There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias (Foucault 1967).

Writing about museums as particular heterotopias, Michael Foucault argued:

> (…) the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place (…) (1967).

…confirming once more an understanding of a museum as a particular *imago mundi,* the reflex of the world.

Moreover, these places are very intense and transformative, while a particular border from the real places to this "other place" needs to be crossed, "(…) the individual has to submit to rites and purifications; to get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures" (Foucault 1967), which is a very important notion for our further discussion.

Performing in the space of fiction

The importance of space and the bodily experience of a museum or heritage site visit could be understood as well through the notion of *entering into fiction* on one hand, as well as the idea of *performing heritage* on the other.

Namely, traditional institutions, such as museums and theatres, are a fiction in which the visitor should reach a state of forgetting his own self – to forget everything about the space in which he is. Only in this way can he be able to spiritually leave the reality of everyday life and immerse himself in the presented fictional world. Boris Groys concluded:

> The art museum visitor had to forget the art museum to become spiritually absorbed in the contemplation of art. In other words, the precondition for the functioning of fiction as fiction is the dissimulation of the material, technological, institutional framing that makes this functioning possible (Groys 2016, 172)

The digital art work or the whole museum on the Internet, on the other hand, although today very technologically well-versed, has the problem that the network itself – the Internet – operates under the assumption of a non-fictional character. The Internet is a medium of information and it is assumed that every piece of information has a reference in reality offline. So, information is always about something, and this something is always off the Internet, that is, offline. Otherwise, Groys believes, all economic transactions on the Internet would be

impossible, as well as all military and security operations. "Of course, fiction can be created on the Internet – for example, a fictional user. However, in that case, the fiction becomes a fraud that can be – and even must be – revealed" (Groys 2016, 173).

On the Internet, art and literature operate in the same space as military planning, tourism, capital investment and so on; Google, among other things, shows that there are no walls on the Internet. Of course, there are special websites or art blogs. But in order to address them, the user has to click and frame them on the surface of his own computer, tablet or mobile phone. Thus, framing becomes deinstitutionalised, and framed fiction becomes defictionalised. The user cannot ignore the frame because he created it. Framing – and the action of framing – becomes explicit and remains explicit during the thinking and writing experience. Here the dissimulation of the framework that has defined our fictional experience for centuries comes to an end. Art and literature can still refer to fiction, not reality. However, we, as users, do not immerse ourselves in that fiction, we will not go through the mirror like Alice; instead, we experience art production as a real process, and works of art as real things. It can be said that there is no art or literature on the Internet but only information about art and literature, along with other information about other fields of human activity (Groys 2016, 174). This conclusion directly brings us to the issue: is it then possible in the cyber, web, museum or work of art on the Internet to reach the moment when a visitor can embark on a contemplative path and become completely overwhelmed with emotions? Technological achievements such as augmented and virtual reality very successfully represent fictional worlds, but concentrating mostly on the visual, while other senses still seem to fail to be involved enough to immerse the visitor into the space of fiction.

When it comes to the bodily experience of museum visit, we could definitely follow its genesis from the wandering of a visitor through curiosity cabinets – as we discussed above the mental wandering was always inseparable from the physical one – to the modern period. On the other hand, today's visitor of a virtual museum tour is limited in experiencing possibilities of movement because the reality in virtual galleries is defined almost exclusively in visual and occasionally auditory categories (Makteviš 2013).

However, the idea of performative heritage introduced by contemporary museum and heritage theoreticians is even more directly suggesting the importance of the presence of body for the perception and even creation of art and heritage space, which helps the stirring of emotional reaction to it. In the very title of their book, Jenny Kidd and Anthony Jackson bring the phrase *performing heritage* connecting seemingly opposite terms – heritage as an eternal and, most often, material value that has been previously formulated, and performance as an action, an act that necessarily takes place at the moment of observation (Jack-

son and Kidd 2012). Studying commemorative events in the context of socialist Yugoslav monuments, Marija Đorđević has come to the conclusion that these grandiose memorial units and parks are meant, constructed and planned for different and often neglected structures, however still invite visitors for certain gestures, interactions and particular performances in that space (Đorđević 2021). The idea of "doing heritage" at the museum or heritage space is also recognised by Australian scholar, Laurajane Smith (Smith 2011). The same author will, analysing various examples of audience reactions to a heritage site, conclude that "museum visiting is an act of *heritage making*":

> Visiting heritage places and museums is an embodied performance that is not only about negotiating what the past may "mean" for the present, but is also involved in exploring and expressing a sense of self and belonging, and understandings of the "other"; (…) It is a process that can reinforce received narratives of self and "otherness" or challenge and remake them – but it is a process in which meaning is actively made. Further, it is a process that is emotional, and in which people emotionally invest in certain understandings of the past and their links to contemporary identity and sense of place (Smith 2016, 17).

Moreover, it is not just the space but, more importantly, the interaction of the body with the artefact and with others that is making a difference between the experience of a physical visit and the online one. Particularly the bodily interaction of the visitor and accompanying emotional experience, which could be gained during art in the real space consumption and exhibition or heritage site visit, still remains irreplaceable. Therefore, we will pay more attention to potentials of these encounters in further research.

Emotional encounters in the museum space

The issue of an encounter with an object and its aura in the museum space is already a very frequent issue in scholarly papers, while an encounter with other visitors is also an important theme. Conducting research 15 years ago, which is a very long period when it comes to themes bond to new media due to fast technical developments and the digital shift, Canadian critical museologist Liana Mctavish came to a conclusion which is still unchanged: there is no massive interest in virtual galleries and users feel constrained, lonely and very limited when visiting. She argued:

> Instead of showing various visitors at exhibitions, virtual galleries are empty. Virtual observers were placed in the circumstances in which there are independent observers – although various studies show that

people usually visit museums in groups. [...] In that sense, virtual museums do not provide visitors with greater freedom of movement and opinion; these rather confirm than transform conventional relationship between museum and audience (Makteviš 2013, 285).

In addition to clearly indicating the museum as a place of exchange and education, today's researchers insist on a museum visit (physical) as a time during which a better mood is achieved, and the visitor, though perhaps alone, wandering through exhibition spaces and absorbing new knowledge and/or aesthetic forms, gains a sense of fulfilment and constructive personal progress (Jokanović 2021).

The attention towards different emotions, which could and usually are expected to be induced during the visit to a museum or heritage site, was especially prevalent with the planning of the conference at the Institute for Public Understanding of the Past at the University of York in March 2020. Although the programme is constituted out of many international scholars bringing examples from all around the world, this event was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

However, even though the period of lockdown brought about a proliferation of digital content and virtual museum tours, feelings of constant isolation, fear and loneliness have finally resulted in the need of a stronger creation of *safe spaces,* in between others, museums as places in which dealing with emotions is encouraged and wellbeing is supported. Therefore, the "Museums for Health and Wellbeing, a Preliminary Report" given by the National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing in the United Kingdom in 2016 seems more relevant today than ever. The Director of Alliance Daniel Heborn explained:

> Over the past few years, an increasing number of museums have been exploring the impact their collections can have on people's health and wellbeing. This has emerged against a backdrop of an increasing interest from the health sector in the impact of cultural engagement on health outcomes, coinciding with changes in health funding which has given more autonomy to local commissioners to explore new models of health and social care provision (Lackoi, Patsou, and Chatterjee 2016, 3).

There are various strategies and various target groups when it comes to the support of mental health and positive emotions in the museum space or at the heritage site. Many programmes use the therapeutical effect of art and creativity, engaging visitors in some of the workshops and immersing them into the artworld exposed. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, for instance, invites people to take part in sculpting and arts and crafts activities. Their "Breathing Space" project

is directed at vulnerable young people combining art therapy, the outdoors, art, and structured and unstructured wellbeing activities. Equally innovative in approach is the Aspex Gallery in Portsmouth which worked with young people aged 11 – 25 who had low self-esteem about their body image, using art and food in collaboration with mental health workers.

On the other hand, initiatives in the museums of Serbia show as well a step forward to these issues. Therefore, the Gallery of Matica Srpska in Novi Sad has created a "Room for Indulging in Art" within the museum space. Inviting visitors to slow down and relax from the stressful everyday life, curators select one work of visual art every month and expose it across the comfortable armchair in a dark space in which just this peace is under the light and appropriate classical music is played.

Similarly, many mindfulness meditations and practices of enhancing awareness and fully inhabiting the present moment are organised in international museums seen as safe spaces where collections can be used to focus the mind, enhance ways of seeing and experience the surroundings.

In the mentioned Report a special category of museum audience with mental health issues is also singled out, while there is a set of activities dedicated to them in different British museums. Consequently, the authors of the Report explained:

> This audience category encompasses all mental health related activity, including mild to severe depression and anxiety disorders (including phobias) or episodes of extreme stress. With mental health-related (or neurological) issues affecting one in four people worldwide and in the UK and with continuous funding cuts to the mental health sector it is not surprising that museums are focusing on this area, though changes towards a community-led, prevention-based health care model are also important drivers for this work. The majority of museums engaging with mental health service users do not tend to target specific disorders and instead aim to build confidence, reduce social isolation and foster a greater ownership over life (Lackoi, Patsou and Chatterjee 2016, 16).

On the other hand, many projects are developed in order to help visitors with dementia, often involving object handling activities revolving around reminiscence while some museums also use a model of new learning and activities based on Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, which encourages people with early to mid-stage dementia to engage in activities that will help them formulate new memories and knowledge. A range of programmes offered to people with dementia and their carers always relies on the two principles: the aspect of socialisation (in dementia cafes – which is the information point as well as the informal socialising hub, through art and health walks, joining in choirs etc.) as well

as the use of a box of objects and a book of memories in the workshops. Truly, there is a number of recent research projects investigating different aspects of the impact that objects and object handling have not just on dementia, but on general wellbeing. A collaborative project between the University of Leeds and Leeds Museums and Galleries named "Value Inside" looked at whether access to museum objects improved the subjective wellbeing of high-security prisoners. Within this project: "Participants kept a diary throughout the 12 weeks of the project and all involved felt a sense of pride and achievement, and the theme of pride and privilege at being allowed to handle ancient and precious objects emerged strongly" (Lackoi, Patsou and Chatterjee 2016, 28).

Objects are often used to trigger a memory and bring it to the surface. To give a local example, the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade has recently dedicated a couple-of-years conception to recalling and preserving memories of older, living witnesses of the period of Yugoslavia. Next to many talks and social media content, the most effective was the setting in the House of Flowers, around the tombstone of the socialist president Josip Broz Tito. The space of this mausoleum itself already has a particular atmosphere in which Yugo-nostalgic visitors become especially emotional. However, the exhibition named "Figures of Memories", based on the theoretical concept given by Aleida Asman, provoked even more feelings of visitors to whom selected artefacts were initiators of individual memories, strong emotions linked to their youth and life in Yugoslavia and longing for the past.

These issues are more highlighted and present in the museum and heritage sector worldwide during the period of crisis caused by the pandemic, social isolation, and fears for health, the economy, and other aspects of life. In December 2020, while almost all museums in Western Europe and the US were closed, in a public letter written to The Times, Alistair Hudson, Director of Manchester Art Gallery and the Whitworth, urged the government to reconsider its lockdown of the culture sector, which allowed gyms and non-essential retail, including museum shops, to open, but not the museums themselves. The argument for such a reconsideration was that: "This is not about the visitor economy, it is about the lifeline that art and culture provide to so many people, especially now – and all provided within an environment of care, consideration, and wonder" (Bradley 2020). Therefore, big conferences, toolkits and books dedicated to the topic of museums and wellbeing are today very present (MuseumNext 2022), while at the same time NFT artworks and virtual galleries are becoming a regular segment of every heritage institution.

Following the increasing use of social networks, virtual spaces and the digital market in museums and the art world, in this paper we have examined whether the physical, real museum space is finally becoming surpassed. However, we came to the conclusion that, as much as technology and the digital environment

is being developed, contemporary society is more than ever in the need of real encounters with others while mind displacing and heritage perception is still dependent on bodily performance and a particular entering into fiction. After we have seen the origins of the idea of the museum as a peculiar *Imago Mundi,* we could understand better why wellbeing and mental health could be one of the priorities of today's museum programmes. On the other hand, new media studies and the development of digital art work and NFTs will undoubtedly reveal their emotional impact on users, creators and collectors in the virtual spaces. However, the museum place as a particular still remains an important societal *safe space* in which rituals of wandering through the setting, interactions with the collection, recalling of memories and indulging in art and creativity are practised and welcome.

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SPACE CRISIS: ENCOUNTER IN THE MUSEUM BUILDING OR ONLINE?
(summary)

Starting from the notion of the proliferation of digital art and museum content over the last few years and an ever-more growing online art market, in this paper we examine whether the real, physical museum space and non-digital art will finally be overcome. However, even proven to be almost indispensable for today's functioning, it is noted that social media and the appearances of artists and art and heritage institutions in virtual spaces is still just another manner of communication, more a promotional tool than a space completely independent of the physical world. Therefore, after considering one of the most prominent digital artworks today and many virtual museum tours in the context of their potential to indulge the viewer, we could come to the conclusion that the lack of bodily experience and the lack of encounters with others in the digital space is influencing the whole perception and emotional reaction of the viewer. Consequently, in the second part of the paper we look back to the origins of the museum space and models characteristic for each collecting and exposing process. Seeing that the wandering of a mind is inseparable from the physical one, we observe a museum space as a space of particular heterotopia, a separate world or, more precisely, an image of the world in which each visitor is entering into the fiction. A performative act of the museum or heritage site visit is seen as crucial. Finally, we see that a museum space today, in a period of crisis, increasing stress, loneliness and fears, is a place where well-being could be supported and encouraged through different programmes, while a real encounter with artefact as well as with other visitors is still unprecedented.

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THE CULTURE OF DISTRACTION: FRAGMENTED VISION AND THE MISERY OF THE SENSES

Abstract: This paper investigates postmodern modalities of the consumption of art, transformed and accelerated by the advent of the Web, and the emergence of social platforms, locus of altered forms of sensuous experience. Fragmented reality appears well suited to a culture of distraction, the general feeling of perpetual diversion and alienation, propelled by device applications, web surfing, social media, and messenger services; a reality in which space is no longer experienced with a synchronous unity of perception and emplacement.

I will examine a reality that has abandoned linear text as the vessel of transmitting information, a reality that in the past few decades has been carried forward by a flood of technical images, following Vilem Flusser's notion.

Lastly, I will scrutinise paradoxical aspects of this virtual domain: what is it that makes an experience itself, when surrogates of someone else's direct or indirect experiences are fed to us through social media, including images, videos, game simulations of various sorts, virtual reality, extended reality? This paradox Bernard Stiegler calls "the loss of participation in the production of symbols" (Stiegler 2014, 10): a symbolic misery that originated in audiovisual and informational mnemotechnological activities, locus of mutated relations with the senses.

Keywords: phenomenology, emplacement, visual representation, kinesthetic, acoustic communication, aesthetic, virtual reality.

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Attention

Speaking of a culture of distraction presupposes and tacitly suggests a close relationship with attention: the process through which a phenomenon does not remain simply within the threshold of consciousness, but is thrust into the foreground of perception, intentionally, and then further scrutinised. Attention is prior to the ability of intentionally observing something: this is Bernard Waldenfels's notion in his *Phenomenology of the Alien*; and intentionality appears to be the locus of phenomenology. Therefore, an intentional act of consciousness can only stem from awareness of objects pertaining to the perceptual field, which brings into being a gesture that germinates into an act of attention. A few questions arise in respect to the apparently fluid unfolding of this process: how much attention is needed for it to be called attention? Where is the dividing line between distraction and attention, the inception of the latter and the waning of the former? How many forms of attention are there? Can I distinguish, enumerate, articulate their individual characteristics? If attention precedes intentionality, is the former a process that stands at the threshold of consciousness, or does it sink below it?

Henceforth, to give voice to these, and many other questions, my observations are meant to analyse a general structural behaviour of online platforms, rather than the specific peculiarities of isolated examples: the names of these websites are therefore purposefully suppressed. Moreover, my interest and focus are limited to the consideration of the question of attention in music and art, and its relation with the navigation of digital social networks: I therefore acknowledge that because of the aim of this research, I disregard, or allude only in passing, to the myriad aspects of digital social media. I investigate this topic through a *phenomenotechnical* lens, provoked by Gilbert Simondon's notion of *technical objects*, and bring into the discourse the thinking of Bernard Waldenfels, together with Vilem Flusser, Bernard Stiegler, all of whom, from their specific viewpoints, have debated many aspects of the digital and analogue world of *techne*.

Gestures

I am sitting at the desk, in front of my laptop; moving one finger of my right hand over the trackpad. I click once to open the internet browser: I click a second time on a shortcut within the browser's home page, which takes me to the so-called timeline of my social media account. I will return later to these gestures and the relevance of their haptic specificity in relation to machines, a

place of investigation dear to Vilem Flusser, with his observations on what he calls *technical images*. But the home page of the social media platform welcomes me with a plethora of information: a timeline displaying other users' events; a chat box showing the users currently online; a myriad of buttons directing to sub-sections and functions; stochastic small windows within the main home page hosting advertisements, links to other events, people I might know, things I might like, a paraphernalia of products I might need. Colours, stills and moving images, sounds and text besiege me from the little squared screen of the machine: squares within squares within squares. A magnifying machine of Jamesian specious reality.

It does not require a big effort of will to be distracted by what I am witnessing and participating in: a social media network is a distraction machine, and it is designed to achieve a well-defined purpose, which is indeed diverting, and entertaining, furtively draining the user's ability to be attentive. It is somehow ironic that such a targeted design, such a specificity of architectural composition, has as its main purpose the distraction of others, the deliberate opiating of the user's attention. But how and why does this actually work?

I return to the home page of my social media website: while scrolling through the timeline of life events, photographs, videos, and whatnot of other users (the platform's 'friends'), I can chat with one of more of these persons online; while doing so I might also cross something which attracts my interest (an event, an advertisement, a news item) and click to know more about it; meanwhile I might like to listen to some music 'in the background' (a disputable idea in itself: poor choice of words for a poor act of listening), music which is provided *in primis* by the many videos, advertisements or links to musical events within the website; I can eventually choose to access more music by opening a new browser window and selecting a preferred 'audio streaming and media services provider' (as per the description from one relevant company). Simultaneously, I am navigating the social media platform and listening to music: most likely I am also eating or drinking something with a mobile phone on the side, which is supplying further connectivity with other 'service providers': more messenger applications, more social media, more streaming services. I am aware that by labelling the activity of listening to music in the 'background' as a bad habit, I am at risk of being accused of having a bias in favour of attentive listening, as the only operable modality. A number of alternative listening modalities indeed come to mind; here a not exhaustive list of overlapping possibilities without a specific order of relevance: distracted [listening], focused, hypertextual, critical and acritical, intermedial, kinesthetic, synesthetic, analytic, synthetic, emotional, logical, bias, neutral, passive, etc.

The restricted repertoire of gestures involved in navigating the Internet invites further investigation: Vilem Flusser's *Into The Universe of Technical Images*

ponders at length the nature of the relationship between our body and the digital world. The Czech philosopher argues that in the transmission of information, what was formerly accomplished by linear text has been carried forward over the past few decades on a flood of *technical images* based on the use of photographs, films, videos, television screens, and computers. Flusser is concerned with the cultural consequences and implications of the mutating form of experience, perceptions, modes of behaviour, and values of such a social turn. I want to expound upon his concerns and observations; Flusser's starting point is that the relationship between the digital devices and tactility is reduced to a minimum datum, the digital pressure of the fingers on smooth surfaces: keyboards, trackpads, glass-like panels. The remainder of the body is relegated to the background, without any real involvement with the events happening on the screen of the computer. Anthropologists such as Ashley Montagu, Constance Classen, and David Howes have written on the topic of tactility and its primary function and relevance in the development of human experience of the world as well as the proprioceptive and interoceptive processes of our bodies. Here I am addressing the senses and the Internet. The issue with sensory experience completely removed from virtual reality appears to be that the primary form of learning in humans, tactility, the awareness by the skin of the world outside, through the process of acquiring haptic cues and feedback, is bypassed with surrogate virtual experiences that are devoid of physicality, or with a physicality heavily modified. Tactile phenomena, and therefore tactile qualities such as roughness and smoothness, disappear if the exploratory movement is removed, argues Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Thus, movement and time are not only an objective condition of knowing touch, but a phenomenal component of tactile information. Smoothness is not a collection of similar pressures, but instead the way in which a surface relates to the time needed for our tactile exploration or modulates the movement of our hand: hence the many modes of appearance of tactile phenomenon cannot be deduced from an elementary tactile perception. The hand, Kant's outer brain.

Again: 'I am sitting at the desk, in front of my laptop; moving one finger of my right hand over the trackpad, I click once to open the internet browser: I click a second time on a shortcut within the browser's home page which brings me to the so-called timeline of my social media account.' A few gestures have taken me far away from my desk: windows (!) into other people's lives, other places and sounds, odours, aromas, and textures; but my experience is so far removed from the real experience of such places, limited to the minimal gestures requested while I am sitting at my desk in front of the laptop: moving one finger over the smooth surface of a trackpad and the computer's keyboard. The spatial displacement is equally evident as I am experiencing at least two dimensions of space

concurrently: the physical space in which I am sitting in front of the computer screen, and the virtual space projected by the window to another world which I am peeking into through the peephole, a voyeuristic gesture destitute of any eroticism or *élan vital*. This is the terrain of Bernard Stiegler's *Symbolic Misery*, in which the French philosopher argues that the advent of postmodern forms of what he call *hyperconsumerism*, media technology *in primis*, have sheared away the ability of humans to be the main actors in production of symbols, and cut away our symbolic access to the meaning of reality. Humans that are no more producers of symbols are relegated and bound solely to the role of consumers: a zombified living condition well depicted in Bertrand Bonello's 2019 film, *Zombi Child*.

Stiegler argues that a problem of individuation, Simondon's notion, arises within the hypertechnological society, with respect to the experience of the Internet: the synchronism of a user's operations elicit circumstances when consciousnesses are unified, acting as one. The loss of definition of the psychic 'I' and the 'We', induced by the control of temporalities of consciousness imposed by marketing through the mechanisation of daily life. Stiegler here echoes Deleuze's control societies; and Lefebvre's critique of daily life.

Techne

Techne, before the unfolding of modern times, was confined to the development of prosthetics, apparatuses in which the human being was the fulcrum and crux of action, the Saint Augustine's *vita activa* in which machines were born to be manoeuvred and controlled by man. With the modern and postmodern acceleration of technological advancement, man is not the sole engineer anymore: machines are the fulcrum and crux of action, man is the prosthetic accessory. Moreover, as Stiegler reminds us again in his *Symbolic Misery*, the human being has ceased to exist as the deus ex machina, becoming more and more the subject of machine-made decisions, evaluations, data extrapolations. Machines that work without the need of human beings, machines that work incessantly, machines that can plan and put into practice decisions ahead of any person. Hannah Arendt's distinction between work and repose, private and social time, as delineated in *The Human Condition*, has been dissolved, and replaced by a continuous intrusion of the public into the private sphere: intrusion propelled by the introduction of portable digital devices and the expansion of internet networks.

It is therefore apparent that distracting machines, virtual machines such as social platforms, are descendants of the Deleuzian's *abstract machines* (introduced in the seminal *Anti-Edipo* and *A Thousand Plateaus*), and develop a novel

definition for what it means to be attentive, and/or focused. Ergo we should inquire into the unprecedented definition for attention regarding something created by new technologies. Am I able to listen to music, write in the chat box, while scrolling through the social media timeline page, responding to incoming messages on the mobile, writing and responding to emails, looking at the latest news, without missing any steps of this procedure? Am I able to engage and sustain all these activities with an uninterrupted effusion of attention? It is hardly possible: we believe it is, because we are provided with digital tools that promote the notion that productivity is advisable in everyday life (an idea from who knows who!), and that this productivity is equivalent to ability to multitask and shift our attention between numerous (and heterogeneous) tasks. This evaluation of productivity deals with two aspects of everyday living in contemporary society: working and consuming. All other aspects can be disregarded because they are redundant, marginal, or eventually retrofitted and ingested by the semiotic chain of work and consumption itself. An example based on the aforementioned scenario will illustrate the point: music is 'provided' to me by a paid service; I can bypass it by listening to music from a 'free' platform, swamped, alas, by advertisements: I am definitely a consumer. Using a messenger service, which is 'free', comes with the caveat of being subject to marketing searches made in the background for which if, for example, I type 'guitar' or 'caviar' into the chat window, in the next few minutes (minutes, not even hours or days!) 'guitar' and/or 'caviar' advertisements flood my social platform: I am a consumer, again. Checking the email exposes me, several times a day, to advertisements and promotions of any sort of 'products and services': I am a consumer, again and again. And the example can be multiplied ad infinitum. The fact that I might ignore the circumstances depicted above does not really matter because marketing strategies work on numbers and preferences of a cloud of potential consumers: to each their own misery. At some point one or more than one of these strategies will hit the target: it is only a matter of probability and time. Temporality here is crucial.

Boredom

As a consumer, my attention span, in the digital realm of media platforms, virtual relations and online events, should be but a short one: a compliant consumer is a quick and fast-paced individual. A productivity of consumerism is required: social platforms, by eliciting a 'diversified' and distracted attention, are purposefully contributing to the establishment of a form of organised but veiled boredom; boredom which is the locus for this sort of consumerism. By alluding to boredom and its significance, I am aware that I introduce a further element to be discussed. Briefly, boredom can be considered a condition which

will lead potentially to changes. A change propelled by boredom which is the *sine qua non* of two fluid states of consciousness: idleness and motion. I move until I rest: I rest until I move. I refer here to the etymological origin of the word in Latin, *moveo* (translated in English as move, begin, provoke, initiate, etc). The superabundance of information provided by social media triggers a sense of displacement and boredom that solicits an action to nullify the sense of tiredness: a vicious cycle in which the effect and cause collide, regenerating and proliferating potentialities of boredom and action. Therefore a broad net of offers (the nefarious 'content') is provided, for a consumer easily displeased and easily distracted: the system, by generating confusion, boredom, a swarm of signs and symbolic references (the fewer the better), guarantees that the consumer does not focus on only one option, but navigates between as many as possible. Boredom which is hauled into an economic process where alienation is used to favour the consumption of fast-withering objects of diversion.

The attention is purposefully fragmented, mitigated, dispersed: the consequences of these new habits fostered by the postmodern digital habitus are yet to be fully enumerated. While it seems difficult to quantify the damage done (or received), it seems plausible to attempt an evaluation of the inescapable changes to the perception of music and art in general, which has been generated by the emergence of social media, audio and media services, messenger applications, etc.

It is worth noting that the ability to listen to music actively (as opposed for example to the 'background music' modality of listening), has been clearly modified by the disintegration of the attention promoted by numerous digital gadgets of alienation that exist on the market. This alteration to the process of listening music, is the same sort that affects the perception of art in general: when I am scrolling daily through hundreds of images and videos of whatever nature which populate the timeline on a social media, I am inadvertently cultivating a habit induced by the virtual social habitus of the Internet; a novel Stendhal syndrome which has little to do with beauty, but where overexposure and redundancy of signs decreases the ability to be attentive and focused on anything, and where the objects in the perceptual field are mutually interchangeable, losing all specificity. A process of normalisation and equalisation which has its beginning in the modern age of mechanical reproduction affects the perception of all the works of art, as Walter Benjamin has clearly elucidated in his well-known essay. An acceleration of the normalisation process to which recording devices, digital devices and internet connectivity have greatly contributed: an endless act of repetition for which objects, real or virtual alike, are more and more similar to each other, perceptually and physically. From this perspective it is manifest how the sensuous experience of hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting is continuously diverted, impoverished, and displaced (temporally and spatially)

by overexposure to repetitive stimuli provided by platforms of social entertainment, such as online social networks and similar web-based applications.

Displacement

The temporal and spatial displacement (as opposed to what anthropologist David Howes calls *emplacement,* implying a sense of bodily attunement to a certain space), produced by social media networks, is in itself worth examining for its remarkable significance and potential consequences. Never before the development of audio-visual recording devices, digital technologies and internet networks, could we have had the same experience twice, as Barry Truax's *Acoustic Communication* points out about the relation between sound and music. In the pre-audio-visual recording era, temporal and spatial events collided in a present sensuous experience never to be repeated as exactly the same; the Heideggerian *dasein*, as 'being in the world'. Antithetically, audio-visual recording devices fundamentally change the way we experience listening to music, see a work of art, experience events of any sort: our ears and eyes are continuously listening and seeing, endlessly, repetitively, obsessively. A piece of music can be heard hundreds of times, in different moments, from different devices, with different tools (headphones, earphones, loudspeakers, etc); not only can I choose to interrupt the music anytime; I can choose to listen to it from any segment or part of the piece; I can even chose the space in which my listening will happen. Emplacement and temporalization of what I experience is completely disconnected from the original musical event itself: today, tomorrow, and in the future I can listen to music recorded in a concert hall somewhere in some other city, some other country, some decades ago; a sort of hallucinatory experience. The development of internet connectivity and the surge of digital social media platforms, has taken the modified modality of experiencing music and visuals a step further from what was already in place with audio-visual recording devices. Recording devices have a specific purpose: to record and playback; a specific support media: tape, vinyl, CD, DVD, Blu-ray, more recently USB key or hard disk. With online platforms, audio-visual outputs are streamed in real time, any time. Not only that: the quantity of the streamed media is not related to the size of the support (for example the data capacity of a CD), because the support does not exist anymore (clouds!). Therefore I am eventually able to listen (or see) a myriad of suggested 'content' (in the current jargon) endlessly without pause or rest. It can be argued that with a vintage portable CD or portable music player, I could have listened to the same music, repeatedly. But there is a striking difference: firstly I have to make an intentional choice about the music on the CD or the music player; secondly the limited (however large) quantity of music on the supporting

media, is again a choice, a measure of temporality: a selection about the quantity of time for listening made by the selection of the material to be listened to.

Temporality

Online streaming departs from both determination of choice and temporality. While choosing one's own music requires an active evaluation of alternatives, a temporal choice, internet streaming fosters a passivity in the decision making: listening becomes one of the many background activities without a foreground. By continuously multitasking, everything is equally foregrounded or backgrounded regardless: a continuum, an infinite vanishing point. It appears in this perspective that online social networks redefine and perhaps abolish the notion of temporality as we knew it before the appearance of the internet. Potentially I can be uninterruptedly 'connected' to the Internet: an activity that can be protracted indefinitely is but an atemporal one, in which time stands still (somehow vouching for quantum physics' spacetime notion). However what is at stake here is internal perception of time, rather than the physics of temporality from without. Perhaps the Homo Digitalis is an atemporal being, bound to a perpetual 'connectivity' which has dissolved the traditional habits of perceiving time, being focused on something, and listening to it attentively. This is the illusory world of perception of Flusser's *technical images*, for which the traditional historical, textually linear thinking, has been overturned by a visionary, superficial mode of thinking; in which physical bodies (solids, objects, things) are disregarded in favour of an abstract universe of photographs, films, computer generated images, in denial of the objective world.

What music, what art: a conclusion

I am about to end my excursus into the intricate realm of digitality, the outcomes and consequences of this relatively novel relationship on the perception of music and art. While I have sketched out challenges of a widespread system of consumerism (Stiegler's *hyperconsumerism* and *hypercapitalistic* societies); while I have delineated the poor habits (as per Bordieu's notion) generated by a social media habitus, purposefully shaping and conditioning the senses; while I have brought into this discourse Flusser's notion of *technical images*, and his concern about the impoverished tactile experience fostered by the digital experience; I am also aware of alternatives paths that have been traced: composer Pauline Oliveros's *deep listening* notion is one; the researches of composers Alvin Lucier and Raymond Murray Schafer into the realm of psychoacoustic and acoustic ecology is another. And many more, hopefully, are out there.

While difficulties and challenges to the experience of music and art are fla-
grantly present within a consumerist system that leaves little room for alterna-
tive modalities of living and behaving, it is also relevant that these issues have
been addressed, repeatedly and, at times, with auspicious outcomes. My short
excursion into the topic of attention and its relevance to today's perception of
music and art, will hopefully spark further discussion and observations, ques-
tions and perhaps elucidations: hence what music, what art is available, envis-
aged, nurtured by the current model and social construct? What music, what art
is an alternative to this model? What music, what art?

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THE CULTURE OF DISTRACTION:
FRAGMENTED VISION AND THE MISERY OF THE SENSES
(summary)

The article brings the reader through a focused examination of what is described as the culture of distraction; a predicament that has its origins in a semiotic chain of human states and activities: the act of being attentive (or else distracted); the gestural act, accompanied by a tactility reduced by the modus operandi of modern and postmodern machines: a techne designed to induce boredom, with the purpose of fragmenting the attention of the users onto a multiplicity of products, services and gadgets. Lastly, the continuous sense of bodily displacement which these technological devices induce.

The article opens by delineating attention as a phenomenological process with which a phenomenon is thrust into the foreground of perception. This introduction opens the door to observations in relation to the transformed relationship between human gestures, tactility and the use of computers, and internet social networks. This mutated relationship ushers in Vilem Flusser's notion of *technical images*: a concern of the Brazilian Czech-born philosopher over the reduced and impoverished tactile experience that digital devices are fostering. A relation of tactility brings into the article's discourse anthropologists' Ashley Montagu, Constance Classen, and David Howes on the sense of touch, its fundamental function in the development of human experience of the world, and the proprioceptive processes of the human body.

An interaction with devices that generate distraction. Social media networks are designed to achieve the purpose of diverting and entertaining, draining the user's ability to be attentive. An example is the impoverished modality of listening to music: the ability to listen to music actively has been modified by the disintegration of the attention encouraged by the numerous digital gadgets available. Furthermore, a modified relationship with attention induces a sense of boredom, railroaded into an economic process: a widespread system of consumerism which Bernard Stiegler identifies as the contemporary *hyperconsumerist* and *hypercapitalistic* societies, tied to the evolution of digital platforms and the media. Boredom is hauled into an economic process where alienation is used to favour consumption.

The article's conclusions take into consideration alternative modalities, and relationships with attention, technology and music: composer Pauline Oliveros's *deep listening*; the research of composers Alvin Lucier and Raymond Murray Schafer into the field of psychoacoustic and acoustic ecology. The topic of attention, the questions of what music, what art is available, envisaged, nurtured by the current model and social construct, are loaded questions. What music? What art? asks the article.

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SPAM (AN)ARCHIVE: PERFORMING UNDER SURVEILLANCE

Abstract: Inspired by the attempt to disrupt data gathering and asking ourselves about "spam" digital practices as forms of resistance, the project *SPAM (An)Archive* brought together the work of the (post)composer and media artist Óscar Escudero and the collective SoundTrieb, whose collaboration took place digitally via Zoom and physically in Switzerland in 2021. Escudero's collaborative work in the last few years with the (post)composer and musicologist Belenish Moreno-Gil has been fruitful at a sociological and cultural level of analysis, beyond music aesthetics, as they both deal with social networks and digital behavior in their music theater compositions. Using Facebook as a digital stage, SoundTrieb's version of *[Custom #2] (a digital melodrama)* allowed performers to develop a double personalization of the piece, intervening their own social media profiles. This paper does not intend to discuss a theoretical approach to these artworks, but their subversive capability. Through a cultural analysis approach, this article recognizes the critical potential against the architecture of digital surveillance that they can achieve, while drawing attention to our complacency to ubiquitous technologies. For this purpose, I introduce notions such as DIY music and coded representation, but I also borrow concepts such as Brigitta Muntendorf's social composing and Escudero's spam art. This paper explores, through work examples by all the above-mentioned artists, recent models of compositional work that blur the line between the digital and the physical, the virtual and the real, the private and the public.

Keywords: Digital surveillance, dataveillance, spam art, contemporary music, digital performance, performance analysis.

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On July 5, 1937, a new product was introduced to the market. It was during the Great Depression in Austin that Jay Hormel repacked and vacuum-sealed unwanted pork meat in a can: "spiced ham", aka "spam". Although the target population in the advertising campaign were housewives, freeing them of spending time in the kitchen with a recipe book on how to use it, Spam became a global product thanks to or because of World War II: it fed the US army and was sent in aid packages to other countries and soon became a dependable food in the postwar period. The ubiquity of the product is what Monty Python's sketch of 1970 refers to: in a British cafe a woman bursts as the waitress recites a menu mainly based on Spam. This unwanted presence gave name to the unsolicited mail that fills our junkboxes. Ironically, Hormel recognized in a 1945 interview for *The New Yorker* that he had a "scurrilous file" in which he collected hate letters by soldiers complaining about eating spam for all their meals (Gill 1945, 15).

The history of spam resonates as the backstory in this paper, which documents the artistic research project *SPAM (An)Archive* funded by the University of Bern and the Burgergemeinde Bern and hosted by the Hochschule Luzern – Musik, of which the composer and media artist Óscar Escudero and the musician collective SoundTrieb were part. It mainly consisted in the production of three audiovisual works from Escudero's *[Custom #]* series and *Flat Time Trilogy*, combining live interpretation and video projection. Its title is undoubtedly inspired by Escudero's motto "Spam Art for a Spam Society", which plays with its edible and digital meaning, as constant irrelevant information mashed as Kebab's meat is consumed every minute. *SPAM (An)Archive* engaged with the topic of digital surveillance and the use of social media in the new music practice, questioning the subversive and resistant character of Escudero's DIY pieces and involving musicians as more than mere interpreters in the making of a multimedia artwork. Therefore, the project could be described as politically driven, as the topic of surveillance cannot be approached without discussing its social consequences. Surveillance artworks try to unveil and help to discern vigilant systems, especially in a moment in which technological determinism is seen with optimism and new technologies appear to be harmless, just as appropriate tools to solve everyday problems, such as urban mobility or the shopping basket. The artistic approach to digital surveillance is widely varied, with some displaying the user's complicity in a critical or playful manner and others attempting to interrupt data collection, as in hacking arts. This paper does not intend to discuss a theoretical approach to digital surveillance, but to reflect on the subversive capability of artistic works, discussing their critical potential against the architecture of digital surveillance and drawing attention to our complacency to ubiquitous technologies. Geolocation and data mining shape a new cosmology in which these mining algorithms try to anticipate, if not generate, any consumer's need. Like the actual spam, communication technologies, and therefore

digital surveillance, were also originally used for military purposes. However, it became a participative model, in which digital users are monitoring each other as our lives are voluntarily being published. That is to say, we are our own spam. All this content creation struggles to transcend ordinary life, to matter. But eventually, these unstructured and large datasets, the so-called big data, differ from the traditional understanding of the archive, as its size surpasses common software tools to manage it and requires analytics and relational technologies. These methods extract value from user behavior to enable predictive analytics and other forms of business intelligence. Unlike the traditional archive, a storage of information at some point considered valuable for its eventual reading and interpretation, the Web 2.0 allows anyone to tag what they just published, assigning it a place in the virtual storage room. Of course, errors and biases affect the gathering in both cases, but the lack of a figure of authority and its replacement by algorithms might permit us to talk about a customized storage room with million bytes of spam content, an *anarchive* where trivial censorship does not allow to show female nipples but fake news is commonplace. This undefined notion of "anarchive" that also entitled the project responds to its experimental frame, here interpreted as the documentation of surplus information, ultimately stimulating new modes of creation, production, and codification.

In this study I examine the creative strategies within the *SPAM (An)Archive* project and discuss some ideas that were present during the whole process, while addressing key aspects from a socio-cultural perspective. I will briefly introduce here Paulo de Assis' notion of "musical strata", since all musical material is an assemblage of different layers or *strata:* "*substrata* (socio-historical and technological contexts), *parastrata* (documentary sources produced by the composer or close collaborators), *epistrata* (editions, writings, theoretical discourses), *metastrata* (future performances), and *allostrata* (extra-disciplinary or not-directly-related materials)" (De Assis 2018, 196; 2018, 39–40). All these layers of analysis contribute to the understanding of a musical work. In this paper I am specifically addressing *substrata*, *epistrata* and *allostrata,* while trying to illustrate political features in the relationship between new music and social networks. Therefore, I introduce notions such as DIY music and coded representation, but I also borrow concepts such as social composing and spam art. My own role within the project went beyond the research observer, as I also contributed to the online performance with situationally created posts with the intention to spread what we were doing. I avoided positioning myself as lead artist but created a thematic framework by giving inputs to trigger individual contributions in a respectful manner. As the project organizer, I was invited to present the results in a concert-talk together with Óscar Escudero within the *[e]motion* Graduate Conference on Science and Technology of the Arts held by the Escola das Artes of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa in December 2021. Unfortunately,

pandemic measures made it impossible for SoundTrieb to perform live, but we were able to make a complete presentation later in May 2022 at the Conservatorio Superior de Música in Saragossa, where SoundTrieb also presented *#AsPresentAsPossible* by Brigitta Muntendorf, thus expanding the project. I would not claim that the anxiety of being watched is what moves all the artists involved in the project, but they certainly express the need to understand its logic and how it materializes in a concert stage situation.

Visual Music: DIY

Besides the overriding question behind the project about how to resist automated surveillance, a more pragmatic issue was: how to achieve the involvement of interpreters in the creative process? Much more discussed on the field of popular music, new technologies have challenged the making, distributing, and experiencing of music, presenting it as a DIY business. It sounds democratic, but it nevertheless hides a complex system based on allowed surveillance in which internet users are merely customers whose choices are processed to give them back what they should listen to. This is called platform capitalism.[2] Within the abundance of music artists trying to get more likes and views to better their metrics and reach popular recognition in order to overcome the lack of institutional support, self-promotion posts have a sad counterpart. In his essay *Sad by design*, Geert Lovink reminds us what Herbert Marshall McLuhan explored as "extensions of man". In the online context, emotions and self-esteem are subject to the dopamine effect of the pleasure of scrolling or swiping, leaving us the feeling of being insignificant.

> Sadness expresses the growing gap between the self-image of a perceived social status and the actual precarious reality. The temporary dip, described here under the code name 'sadness', can best be understood as a mirror phenomenon of the self-promotion machine that constructs the links for us (Lovink 2019).

It is hard to deny that platform capitalism has worsen human communication and social interaction. A quick click on "interested" or "like" in an overloaded events calendar might be the most common reaction to self-promoting campaigns. More specifically within the new music creation, we are witnessing how composers and music collectives struggle for visibility on social media. They are doing so by combining private and professional information as the result of the

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2   Nick Srnicek defines platforms as an infrastructure in which "customers, advertisers, service providers, producers, suppliers, and even physical objects" can interact, but also offering "a series of tools that enable to build their own products, services, and marketplaces" (2017, 43).

so-called self-branding strategy, which is in fact the topic of the first piece of the *[Custom #] series* from Escudero. However, even if I do not address this interesting sociological feature of the cultural field related to marketing and networking on this occasion, I believe there is a connection between this exposure and the creative process.

Following the Frankfurt School idea that choice is an illusion within the culture industry (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002),[3] the reactions we get on social media are politically driven actions as our network of friends and followers reacts to our (re)actions. In that sense, one might like an upcoming event organized by a Facebook-friend just to appear connected to a certain social group. This structurally overdetermined activity undermines any democratic discourse and feeds a more gremial interest that in the end only benefits the succeeding platform. All our reactions, likes, interests expressed via clicks have economic value as they enlarge big data's sets of information. Indeed, self-control and visual self-disciplining of internet users play an important role. Hito Steyerl elaborates on this new regime of representation, as she analyzes the shift in modes of self-production and adverts how "hegemony is increasingly internalized, along with the pressure to conform and perform, as is the pressure to represent and be represented" (2012, 167).

More and more composers are taking advantage of new technologies to explore our hybrid present, in which both virtuality and physicality are part of the same continuum. The usage of video recordings, online material from platforms like YouTube, field recordings or other audiovisual inputs in new music is increasingly acknowledged as an obvious choice for composers. As Nicolas Nova and Jöel Vacheron remind us, hybridization or remixing practices became a popular tendency in music in the 2000s (2018).[4] The same happened in the realm of the Web 2.0, as those new applications reproduced the same combining logic, resulting in the era of mashups. It is gradually becoming possible to observe how composition is shifting towards communities of practice (Wenger 1998), combining reflexive interpretation that goes beyond the standards of just

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3   "Industry is interested in human beings only as its customers and employees and has in fact reduced humanity as a whole, like each of its elements, to this exhaustive formula. Depending on which aspect happens to be paramount at the time, ideology stresses plan or chance, technology or life, civilization or nature. As employees people are reminded of the rational organization and must fit into it as common sense requires. As customers they are regaled, whether on the screen or in the press, with human interest stories demonstrating freedom of choice and the charm of not belonging to the system. In both cases they remain objects" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 118).

4   They wrote about algorithmic culture as a current phenomenon consisted in "automate research, assembly, and creation of content" and explore what might be called "bot art": algorithmic procedures and automated combinations of artistic content. On remixing practices see also Cano 2018.

rehearsing and performing live, and requires a much more complicated logistic work and online gatherings.[5]

In this paper I mainly focus on Escudero's *[Custom #2]*, an original DIY proposal that accepts the current logic of our mediatized world and challenges its signification. However, as SoundTrieb performed Brigitta Muntendorf's *#AsPresentAsPossible* last may in Saragossa and I borrow her notion of "social composing", it is worth introducing here the nature of this piece in contrast to Escudero and Belenish Moreno-Gil's pieces. Acknowledging the above-mentioned perversity of broadcasting through social media "self-branding" publications and being ourselves the objects and subjects of freelance marketing campaigns, Muntendorf, whose piece does not necessarily foresee a personalization of the video material, works in line with Steyerl's observation about the Internet's walkout. More and more people avoid representation and try to keep their offline lives far from the online exhibitionism:

> In our digital-real continuum the existence and "raison d'être" is constituted by visibility – while invisibility is equivalent to non-existence. In #AsPresentAsPossible the musicians define their presence by a vanishing self, entering the stage without instruments and exploring the space between defining and being defined between projecting and being projection. 'I'm a white page, in a soundscape, on a wide stage, I'm a white page' (Muntendorf 2017).

In Saragossa, SoundTrieb's member Juan José Faccio went on stage all dressed in white and his body was mapped with Carola Schaal's digital representation. Her body in his body played with strangeness and even stressed the idea of being voluntarily a "white page", completely in consonance with the statements the performer reproduces live:

> I wish WE could breathe like someone who never breathed before
> I wish WE could breathe like someone who never breathed before
> I wish WE COULD SEE like someone who never SAW before
> I wish WE COULD BE like someone WHO HAS never BEEN before
> (Muntendorf 2017).

On the contrary and following the Internet's logic, Escudero and Moreno-Gil's DIY pieces require the personalization of the video material, inserting close-ups provided by the performers, as well as their Facebook public records. This process assures the artists, as long as they are co-editors of their own publishing house, the revenues not just for the purchase of the score, but of each new

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5   Etienne Wenger specifies which characteristics define "communities of practice": mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

video editing. But this new composer's role must be understood from its aesthetical and political implications: the interpreter obtains a more participative and creative space which ultimately permits his or her self-realization and subversion, but this model also identifies the interpreter as a "user of the piece" (Óscar Escudero, n.d.). Indeed, BELOS Editions was created as the result of mimicking the formal processes of any social platform, which includes customization in a broader sense: personalized as non-transferable product but also to be treated as customer.[6] According to Muntendorf's definition of social composing, this model replicates the logic of platform capitalism. It is not just about reproducing visually the "user-friendly" and attractive interface these technologies provide, but to mirror all features of "usership" like tracking personal data after previously signing an agreement form, being consonant with the financial, legal and ideological behavior of those corporations.

SPAM is not DADA

> Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is DADA; protest with the fists of one's whole being in destructive action: DADA; acquaintance with all the means hitherto rejected by sexual prudishness of essay compromise and good manners: DADA; abolition of logic, dance of those who are incapable of creation: DADA; every hierarchy and social equation established for valued by our valets: DADA; every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, every apparition and the precise shock of parallel lines, are means for the battle of: DADA; the abolition of memory: DADA; the abolition of archaeology: DADA; the abolition of prophets: DADA; the abolition of the future: DADA; the absolute and indisputable belief in every god that is an immediate product of spontaneity: DADA […]. Liberty: DADA DADA DADA; the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE ("Dada Manifesto 1918" 2013, 13).

The word "DADA" in the 1918 Manifesto could be easily replaced by Escudero's notion of "spam": "product of disgust", "abolition of logic", and "the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies", also define how spam is perceived by internet users. But there are also other shared resonances with Escudero's artistic statement. As already approached in the previous section, there is a social and economic equation that permeates the realm of the aesthetic. Furthermore, the "abolition of archaeology", "abolition of memory", and "abolition of the future" work in line the project's

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6   This play on words is borrowed from Óscar Escudero.

anarchival perspective, as it stands up for the presentism that characterizes our times. And finally, the vanguard movement and Escudero's artistic practice are both traversed by affective features. I will address these two key aspects later. For now, it is not the purpose of this section to draw a comparison between an artistic movement like Dadaism and an artistic statement like "Spam Art for a Spam Society". However, the underlined features might help to understand the core idea of "spam art" and suggest a genealogy in which DADA became spam in our present times.

Escudero and Moreno-Gil are concerned with the augmented reality or virtual/physical dichotomy critique and take a digital and physical concept such as "spam" to point out how the Internet has altered our interactions outside the Web. In this sense, the subjects of the digital archive are at the center of their critical and aesthetic approach. As previously explained, Escudero and Moreno-Gil's pieces require the customization of its visual material by inserting portrait shots by the performers and some of their Facebook data. With SoundTrieb's *[Custom #2]* version we wanted to involve interpreters in a more active manner promoting the *spamization* of the Web: they were able to create visual content and intervene within the frame of a common topic that would be finally edited by the composer. The aim did not consist of dynamiting the field of art, but rather it tried to reflect through artistic creation the absence of a clear border between the real and the virtual, and the understanding of our present life as perpetual spam.

> I can't think of a more genuine way of our time than knowing, sharing, modeling our physical appearance, choosing our vote, eating or fucking based on the entropic logic of *spam*, nor probably a profession that generates it in huge quantities more than an artist. How to activate eroticism and strangeness through that stimulus turned into kebab meat, food for Saturday nights – where the *productive nihil* still reigns among mortals for a few hours, is a different matter. But how not to see in that reheated pasta, in its irresistible indefinition, which is neither 100% everything nor 100% anything, an opportunity? Just as the structure of *post-flesh* proteins changes with each twist of the skewer, the material that makes up the *spamundo* remains erodible, but in a relaxed society like ours, is not precisely that the gateway for change, as it is what understands it better without provoking an immunological reaction? More *spam*? (Escudero 2021).[7]

Not differently, Hito Steyerl writes about our spam culture:

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7   My translation. Original document shared by the artist.

> In a few hundred thousand years, extraterrestrial forms of intelligence may incredulously sift through our wireless communications. But imagine the perplexity of those creatures when they actually look at the material. Because a huge percentage of the pictures inadvertently sent off into deep space is actually spam. Any archaeologist, forensic, or historian – in this world or another – will look at it as our legacy and our likeness, a true portrait of our times and ourselves (Steyerl 2012, 161).

Spam art goes beyond the simplistic idea of remixing or relocating data as the subversive strategy in Dadaism and tries to replicate the logic of social platforms to create content. The selected material is transformed and reorganized to produce newer contributions, even if sometimes they have unforeseeable consequences that escape the artist's will. According to this, *spamizing* something that is already spam, in the sense of contributing to a mash-up of apparently disorganized content only navigable through biased algorithms, would become an inadvertently action and an intelligent tactical move. The claim that we need more spam is the logical consequence to Elise Morrison's reminder that we are benefiting from "user-friendly personal gadgets and software systems" that are "the fruits and spoils of war" (2013, 12). This narrow line between commercial and martial logic is what permit artists to rethink tactically how to intervene these sophisticated technologies. Reflecting on these topics, Brigitta Muntendorf wrote:

> Affect through participation, communication through sharing in mixed, permeable realities – these are the social platforms of the now real-digital spaces and their communication models within which interaction processes between information and social resonance are explored, discarded, lived, perceived as controlling or liberating, and used or abused. Out of these models important social and artistic questions have to be re-imagined such as the construction of identities and communities, or the definition of presence and attendance, the private and the public, and the possibilities of sensual experiences within digital artificiality (Muntendorf 2015).

Within this frame, she locates her concept of "social composing", a "perceptive unit that searches for strategies of articulation in order to reflect" our contemporary real-digital balance, suggesting even the possibility of contesting and acknowledging the controversial nature of the interplay between artist and user. Muntendorf also differentiates two approaches to the relationship between social media and composing: the use of social media as compositional material out of the platform are works *about* social media, insofar as they operate without its communication model; and the user-generated content as part of the composition process. She recognizes that this second model has prominent examples in

the commercial realm, as it also happened with the DIY music. Nevertheless, Escudero and Moreno-Gil's works definitely fit in this category and question the traditional role between composer-interpreter, as it also does their artistic partnership within the new music world, blurring notions such as authorship and agency.

Coded Representation

There is some sort of "database aesthetics" in the work of Escudero and Moreno-Gil. Lev Manovich already addressed this topic in his essay *The Language of New Media*, in which he discusses that new media objects organize content and form without any specific narrative purpose (2001, 218–221). This does not mean that there is no narrative at all, but the traditional linear concept has been redefined. According to this, the video projection in the *[Custom #] series* reproduces the navigation through Facebook's feeds, including the interactive multiple trajectories each link provides. This could be considered a *hypernarrative* example, as long as it results in "a series of connected events caused or experienced by actors" (Manovich 2001, 227).[8] Escudero and Moreno-Gil are interested in the principle of presence in digital representation while performing live. Who, when and where are essential information inputs and work as coordinates in their work, especially in the *Flat Time Trilogy*, a set of solo pieces with video and electronics.

Facebook consists of a website potentially to-be-updated by its users on a daily basis: photos, videos, texts, clicking on ads, all of them carrying metadata like geolocation, date and even the device model from which we accessed the platform. Despite the possibility to modify this content, the user's real presence vanishes in his/her virtual alter ego, being this any differentiating attitude at all. The binomic "physicality-virtuality", on which Ferran Planas Pla focuses on in his paper "Composing Social Media. The Representation of the Physicality-Virtuality Continuum in Óscar Escudero and Belenish Moreno-Gil's Works" (2022), must be perceived as the tension and inconsistency of the actual. This author analyzes how concepts such as "simultaneity, hyperreality, flat time and narcotisation and absorption" are used by the artistic duo to address the relationship between the digital and the physical environment of each performance. Paraphrasing Escudero about the *[Custom #] series*, sound works as the axiom between all elements to grant the simultaneity during the live performance, in which the screen and the musicians are clearly separated on stage. Differently, the *Flat Time Trilogy* integrates the performers' bodies by mapping them and

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8   Manovich is in fact quoting Mieke Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

requiring the bodily interaction with what is happening in the screen. Although Planas' essay is an overwhelming analysis with which one could not disagree, and as this paper exposes how SoundTrieb's *[Custom #2]* version was developed, it is necessary to punctuate an important feature about their staging proposal. Planas introduces Jean Baudrillard's notion of "hyperreality", as Escudero himself refers to the French author, and states:

> The representation of the subject through the profile on social media or through their digital identity is, therefore, a simulacrum of the subject that is as real as their own body. In its turn, the physical subject can also be understood as a simulacrum, since it is through its forms of representation that it is perceived and therefore exists. In this way, the subject himself is constituted of simulacra, since the reference to an original does not exist, but has an autopoietic nature through the representation that permeates the totality of its forms of being in the world, both physically and digitally (Planas Pla 2022, 86).

He later comments on the lighting setup:

> […] we can see how the performers on stage are illuminated with coloured lights that only show their silhouettes, while their faces projected on the screen above them are completely clear. This scenography places the physical subject on a different layer. While the idea of the work is to show the body of the performers and their video representations with the same clarity to demonstrate the simultaneity between the two dimensions, in this case, physical bodies are relegated to the background and are presented more as the shadows of the subjects than as bodies, thus demonstrating the equally (un)real and (un)tangible nature of the physical and the virtual (Planas Pla 2022, 86).

Indeed, the shadows also converts the performers in two dimensional figures, exactly as their *alter egos* on the screen, emphasizing the ambiguity of presence. However, this appropriate analysis deserves contextualization. Given that the entire project was carried out during the most restrictive months of the Covid-19 pandemic, the scenic solution sought to make explicit the isolation that the historical context offered. This separation of the bodies by means of improvised plastic booths was enhanced by the lighting setup designed by Corentin Marillier, who devised the luminous signal in relation to the sound interventions of each performer. Likewise, and in the same way that the dark and dry sound color of the performance was chosen, the scenography proposed by the collective aimed to enter into dialogue with the theme of the piece – *(a digital melodrama)* – as well as with the gestural interventions of the video projection.
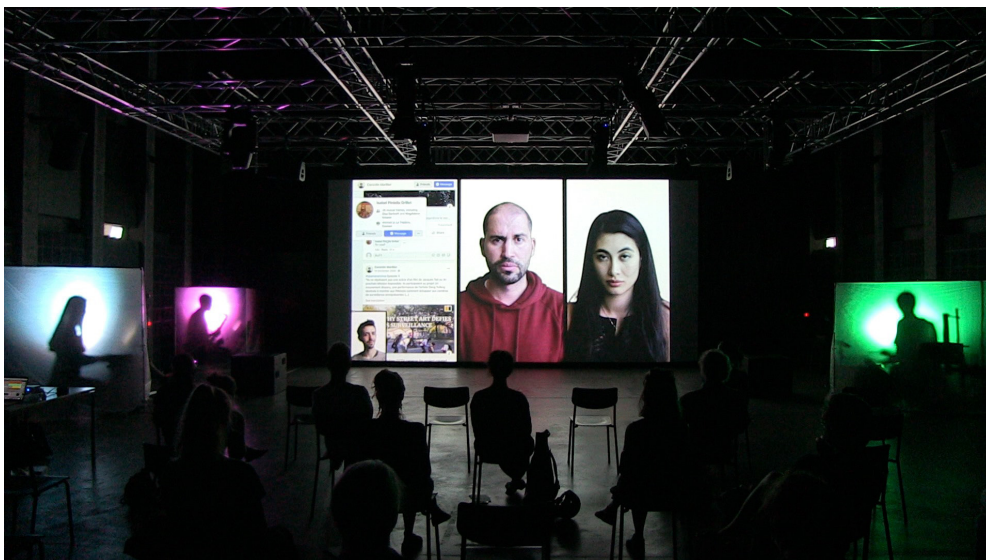
Figure 1. *[Custom #2] (a digital melodrama)* performed by SoundTrieb on June, 27th 2021 at the Hochschule Luzern – Musik within the *New Music Days*.

Figure 2. *[Custom #2] (a digital melodrama)* performed by SoundTrieb on May, 11th 2022 at the Conservatorio Superior de Música in Saragossa within the *GLITCHERS Transmedia Music Day*.

Considering this thematic approach, I would like to discuss further the melodramatic hypernarrative of the piece. Michael Brailey interviewed Escudero and Moreno-Gil within the frame of the performance series "The New Anxiety", in which Darren Gallacher performed *[HOC]* 14 days before SoundTrieb in 2021 in Manchester. They explained that their works reflect on not just FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) but FONBS (Fear of Not Becoming Spam), which is, as they say, the "new state of play". Both the *Flat Time Trilogy* and the *[Custom #] series* represent these fears through the time-killing behavior produced by social platforms. Acknowledging that we continuously generate "(ir)relevant products" and contribute to the progressive "algorithmization of life", both artists claim that anyone's sadness is always individual (Virtuallyreality, n.d.).

By melodrama I understand a pathetic and emotionally driven (hyper)narrative, even overacted. Philosopher Olivier Marchart has argued why melodrama is the political theatrical genre *par excellence*, concluding that, as in the revolutionary speech, the focus of the emotions that are put into motion are not those of the individual subject but of the collective (Marchart 2004). That is to say that melodrama is not about the inner drama but social relationships. As I interpret in the resulting version of *[Custom #2]*, the performance ends up creating a conflictual relationship built upon digital voyeurism, guilt, tension and isolation. We have been warned about the mental health consequences of spending time on screen activities. Geert Lovink begins his reflection by quoting Jean M. Twenge's observation on the field, as she saw a decrease in social skills and happiness in teenagers to whom having their phones close while they are sleeping gives them comfort (Twenge 2017).[9] But Lovink gives us a better clue to approach Escudero's work by bringing Audrey Wollen's *Sad Girl Theory* into discussion. Wollen claims that sadness is a feminist strategy as sorrow can also disrupt systems of domination (Watson 2015).[10] Thus, paraphrasing Wollen, melodrama should be recognized as an act of resistance, and we have the right to be as "goddamn" melodramatic as we want.[11]

What this melodramatic piece reminds us of is also the "exhausted self" the augmented reality results in.

> Omnipresent social media places a claim on our elapsed time, our fractured lives. We're all sad in our very own way. As there are no lulls or quiet moments anymore, the result is fatigue, depletion and loss of energy. We're becoming obsessed with waiting. How long have you been

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9   I am paraphrasing Jean M. Twenge's quote from research.
10   Wollen contextualizes sadness within affect and gender theories, turning it into a political strategy. However, she is aware that social media uses emotions as coded data for economic profit.
11   Original quote is a paraphrase by Tracy Watson: "be as goddamn miserable as we want."

forgotten by your love ones? Time, meticulously measured on every app, tells us right to our face. Chronos hurts. Should I post something to attract attention and show I'm still here? Nobody likes me anymore. As the random messages keep relentlessly piling in, there's no way to halt them, to take a moment and think it all through (Lovink 2019).

The video projection displays often the question "are you there?" and we are able to listen to a fragment of John Lennon's "Jealous Guy" mixed with the electronics channel. Lovink's essay continues analyzing behavioral patterns and the anxiety caused by different social platforms. Even if Escudero's piece is mainly focused on Facebook, Lovink's analysis is in line with it. As we can infer from the video, we log in every day waiting for something, a message, a tag, better metrics, but also someone else's post that fits our expectations to be able to react. The same expectation that somebody may answer (or at least like or react) generates "online despair" and "incites jealousy, anxiety and suspicion", which ultimately will have an influence in the offline relationship (Lovink 2019).

Figure 3. *[Custom #2] (a digital melodrama)* video recording by SoundTrieb filmed in December 2022.

Another example of social media anxiety occurs in *[HOC]*, one of the *Flat Time Trilogy* solo pieces, in which the percussionist is confronted with an ever-present situation of an omitted action alluded constantly by the voice-over in different verb tenses. When we finally hear the stroke on the snare drum, it triggers an audio recording of frightened voices during a rescue of migrants in

the Mediterranean Sea. The same simulacrum and simultaneity as in *[Custom #2]* operate in this piece: digital or physical, reality keeps on going and fatalities occur while we keep posting repeatedly in our social media platforms. More in connection with the "anarchival" nature of the project, referred to by Escudero and Moreno-Gil with their own notion of "flat time", the ever-present floating information in the Internet is to be understood as an eternal (an)archive, which nobody organizes, but in which everything can be located by the coordinates "where", "when", and "who". We can find and read any past publication on any social media feed (with the exception of ephemeral stories on Instagram) with the intensity of a present action.[12] There is an ongoing scholarly discussion about "presentism" among historians, being François Hartog noted due to his notion of "regimes of historicity", that is to say how we relate to the past, present, and future; although his historical genealogy and when our contemporary society became "presentist" is open to discussion. Avoiding a controversial detour, the Internet and especially the Web 2.0., with its social networks at its peak in the last twenty years, surely contributed to the shift in our perception of time. Following Wolfang Ernst's essay *Das Rumoren der Archive*, Rudi Laermans and Pascal Gielen talked about "mesh-works" instead of "networks" to stress the idea of Ernst's "digital an-archive" (Laermans and Gielen 2007). They summarize it as follows:

> […] the digital an-archive is synonymous with an ever expanding and constantly renewed mass of information of which no representation at all can be made. This "sublime" reality – or, rather: this "virtuality" – can not be ordered or catalogued: it is a non-archived archive, and therefore an an-archive, a literally metaphorical archive (Laermans and Gielen 2007).

Furthermore, both authors also highlight the performative nature of this concept, no matter if "linked with the exercise of power" or related to "tactical navigating practices", as it means that the very exercise of use and re-use information generates immediately new data (Laermans and Gielen 2007).

Gilles Deleuze published a short essay in 1990 in which he described how society moved from a "disciplinary society", as unveiled by Michel Foucault, towards a "society of control" (Deleuze 1992, 3–7). According to Deleuze, this societal model operates in open networks in which people participate freely and forms of control are ubiquitous: data gathering and predictive analytics is where power lies on. Social media companies sustain gigantic databases in which the

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12   Also, Ferran Planas Pla alludes to flat time "as an archive that breaks down the time barriers between present and past, allowing immediate access to past events without the need for linearity" (2022, 89).

private and the public are no longer separated. New technologies increasingly require geolocation data and we voluntarily grant it by accepting their terms of use. Somehow this perpetual "logged-in" status transforms our physical context into a mere input for our digital parallel world (Vehlo Diogo 2016, 7). By inserting Google Earth captures of each venue in their videos, Escudero and Moreno-Gil play with drone aesthetics to stress our digital reality during the performance. The decision of including aerial images instead of Google Maps provides the chance to play with its three-dimensional and high-resolution representation and the zoom-in perspective, enabling the artists to create a drone-like portrayal for a concrete event that illustrates the ongoing process, which will ultimately become just a code in the database. Ironically, the artists play with this constant reminder of real spatial coordinates while individuals' interactions occur in a progressively digital, and therefore *deterritorialized,* world. Indeed, cartographic applications not only became the "fundamental matrix" of any other platform, but "ended up creating a comprehensive map of where we are in relation to the network" (Vehlo Diogo 2016, 64). If taking into consideration Michel Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and the *panopticon,* our current world would determinate that both power tools are deeply entangled, as nothing escapes the capabilities of the Internet, leaving no room left for the incommensurability of life, where every atom has been replaced by a bit in the digital landscape (Negroponte 1995).

I already comment on DIY music and how the interpreters are being more and more integrated in the compositional process. *[Custom #2]* differs from other pieces by the Spanish artistic duo, as it has an open instrumental trio setup. The score consists of several signs placed rhythmically, being partially a graphic score, and leaving the performers the sound choice: "[it] is understood as a frame in which they are completely indexed, following certain 'game rules' and finding a scenic and sonorous solution" (Óscar Escudero, n.d.). Following this, sound could be understood as the result of self-given rules by the performers, but still identifiable within the whole structure of the musical work. The composer acts not as the sovereign power, as in a master-pupil relationship. On the contrary, he creates the space that aims to potentiate innovative performance practices. Clearly referencing Jacques Rancière's "empancipated spectator", de Assis concludes there must be first an "emancipated performer".[13] If reading Rancière, this agency was implicit:

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13   This notion has become very popular in the last few years. Probably with mutual unawareness, Juan José Faccio Peláez, one of SoundTrieb's members, discussed it in his master's thesis. Although de Assis focuses on past musical works, Faccio was only concerned about new music: "El intérprete emancipado: Hacia una estética del concierto de música contemporánea" (MA Thesis, Universidad de Barcelona, 2014).

> What there is are simply scenes of *dissensus*, capable of surfacing in any place and at any time. [...] It means that every situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification. To reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought is to alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities and incapacities. [...] This is what a process of political subjectivation consists in: in the action of uncounted capacities that crack open the unity of the given and the obviousness of the visible, in order to sketch a new topography of the possible (Rancière 2009, 48–49).

It is the interpreter's role to join the discussion about the composer-performer's relationship and struggle for a place of enunciation not just on stage, but within the production process:

> The fundamental step, then, is the passage from a passive reproduction of scores to an adventurous experimentation with all the available materials, taking real decisions, redistributing relations, changing how a given work is perceived, distributed, communicated. [...] It is crucial to have performers who think, who intellectually engage with the problems and delusions of their own time, who creatively suggest new modes of organising knowledge, and that effectively operate transformations in society (De Assis 2018, 199).

SoundTrieb's *[Custom #2]* version worked in this direction and required a double personalization of the video material according to the project's overarching question on how to perform resistance, instead of leaving this task solely to the composer. The collective had to post on a regular basis anything they wanted related to the main topic of automated surveillance or dataveillance with a melodramatic tone. This was one the greatest challenges of the whole project, as creating subversive participation and behaving disciplined but disobedient was understood more as a troll-like activity than a *Trojan* horse, by no means a virus but a tactical move. What I witnessed during this posting activity by the interpreters showed a lack of general artistic and aesthetic education within the classical music field: during the process some musicians hesitated and showed reluctance to this requirement as they felt under pressure and did not want to pollute their own social media feeds, be tagged as political artists, or be misunderstood by their Facebook friends. In fact, one of the musicians abandoned the project arguing she only used Facebook for promotional reasons. But are not often ads digressive, provoking, and innovative, but also reflective and emotionally touching? In fact, the problem was the understanding of the word "political" itself, so they were not sure about what the content of their posts should be and instead of triggering creativity, this requirement played against inspiration.

While the original idea of *spamizing* Facebook was to create an emancipatory space, in which random statements against surveillance capitalism serve to the hypernarrative of the video, in the end musicians withdrew to their position as interpreters waiting for step-by-step instructions that they should execute without compromising their own digital profiles. Hence, Muntendorf stresses the artistic confrontation and fragile corpus of social compositions, as the most important instrument is also "the most historically and socially influenced", the performer (Muntendorf 2015). She discusses how composers are confronted with interpreters concerned about performing according to their trained skills and pursuit of perfection. However, social composing is interested in the person behind the instrument, focusing on amplifying his/her own experience. Similarly, de Assis calls for an emancipated performer even in relation to traditional classical music, as the image of musical works is an established entity understood as completely closed artistic material.

We surpassed this issue with a tactical set: we discussed the topic via online meeting, shared readings and prepared strategies, a calendar scheduling all posts and even a draft, as posts had to include at least five hashtags. Interesting and dissimilar reactions can still be tracked online: the *#artprostitution* hashtag as internal protest, the *alter ego* picturing to present a virtual persona detached from the real musician, or the straight warning message about posting for a specific project, which somehow canceled the spam purpose. There was also a genuine experience by one of the musicians: after posting randomly distorted pictures, Google Earth captures, lyric fragments illustrated with GIFs, all of them with the hashtag #spamanarchive, he received a warning message by Facebook in case his profile had been hacked. All these artistic and political positions end up constituting a small but diverse sample of the classical music education on creativity and self-confidence, but also and mainly of the general use by the customers of platform capitalism. In all fairness, not all the activity was extrinsically motivated through the calendar, as some of the musicians engaged in the activity without thinking in the final video, as it was enjoyable. Therefore, I can state that despite the attempt to create a framework for emancipated interpreters, the project failed in creating the needed "relatedness" for intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 2000, 64).[14] Facebook metrics also played a role in the project. Despite SoundTrieb's members having dissimilar interactions with this platform, the most liked and reacted posts were those that always included a picture in which the physical person was recognizable. However, according to the self-branding feature within social media, the composer's participation contributed to spread the activity, although little could be done in some cases, as some profiles had restricted access for viewers.

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14   Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are key terms in the Self-Determination Theory.

As previously stated, there were some interesting resistance examples. A basic example against facial recognition in pictures was the series of photographs covering the face with a snare drum. At the beginning of the project, we discussed the idea of creating new Facebook profiles just for it. However, after doing some research on fake profiles, it would have been difficult to pursue it within the research's short time frame: the need of new e-mail accounts and the lack of Facebook friends were an important handicap. But most importantly, it would work against the "usership" model of Escudero and Moreno Gil's works. That is why the performer created a character named after the snare drum brand, P.E.A.R.L., accompanying the pictures with quotes from Jean Baudrillard or posing as reading George Orwell's *1984*. Differently, a second member decided to create random posts contributing to some sort of chaosmosis within his own feed, resulting in private family messages asking what he was doing at all. The common sense of normality and Facebook users' own censorship seem to be threatened in front of alternative uses of the platform. Another member of the collective who, despite having an account was not active on Facebook, decided to share critical articles on digital surveillance and geopolitics without any personal comment. Instead, this member added the hashtag *#artprostitution* to vindicate the unwillingness to be posting anything at all. Those shared articles were an attempt to maximize the anxiety of being watched, but also to expose the negative impact of information technologies in our access to information and, ultimately, in our political choices. On the other hand, the hashtag emphasized the anxiety in the face of social pressure and the trackable void created by the gigantic database of this social network. Even if Facebook is not designed for matching people, there is, as in Tinder and similar apps, the fear of rejection: better avoiding to show our ideologies than being tagged as a real person with passions, political outrages, ethical commitments and any other limitation to please the majority. We are afraid of falling into a stereotype: it is more dangerous to have your political thoughts caught on the Web as they will not disprove whatever you are denouncing but you, than to state you are participating in an artistic project.

Concluding thoughts

Disillusionment with the idea of revolution and any utopian justice has contributed to a general retreat and the acceptance of our post-political order. Furthermore, digital surveillance and dataveillance is, borrowing Morrison's terms, "by design, participatory" (2013, 5). Our participation in surveillance systems and platforms have become ambivalent, triggering imagination and resistant methods of usership within the art practice. Responses that are not radical, but

rather denouncing and defensive in a creative way. Disciplined disobedience has then become a form of resistance enacted within a specific field of knowledge. Indeed, as Michael Walzer reminds us, disobedience "does not require the total renunciation of the established social order", which means resistance must be practiced within the frame of a given system and given rules (Walzer 1960, 370).[15] Artists like Escudero, Moreno-Gil and Muntendorf turn to their advantage this participatory feature as it is the crack from which a critical and subversive discourse can slip through.

New music's interdisciplinary approach is the vehicle with which composers, interpreters, and media artists contribute to our understanding and perception of the world by (re)interpreting existing power relations. This political facet is constantly being negotiated and that is why art might provide critical and emancipatory potentialities. As seen in the previous analysis, composers' engagement with digital prints and therefore dataveillance critique may contribute to political change without supporting any explicit political movement. Following Chantal Mouffe's definition of critical art, artistic creation should bring "to the fore the existing of alternatives to the current post-political order" (Mouffe 2013, 912–913). Within this scope, Escudero and Moreno-Gil's pieces, as well as Muntendorf's, could not be defined as critical compositions, as they only reproduce the Internet's logic. However, it is impossible to deny that their work is a political act in itself. Their contributions to the awareness of the digital order and its implications in our present augmented reality may also have achieved political change. That is, appropriating the logic of platform capitalism to create models of usership that escape their original purpose. In fact, one could ask why should artists be tagged as critical or political at all? As Frank Möller states, "there is no reason to assume […] that artists and artworks can achieve what other social agents fail to achieve" (Möller 2015). Thus, exonerating SoundTrieb's initial reluctance, musicians who wish to perform this kind of repertoire are also confronted to their own participation in the medium. However, there must be the willingness to be moved, as already emphasized by Jacques Rancière in his seminal essay and therefore, hesitation, controversy, self-critique, and openness to dialogue are more than welcome steps.

This ongoing content creation that mashes up all sort of information about our lives is what can be recognized as our "spam society". Escudero and Moreno-Gil, as well as Muntendorf, never intended to resist against this societal system by confronting its medium. On the contrary, they engaged with its logic and

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15   See also what the artist-activist group Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) calls "digital resistance" in *Digital Resistance and Electronic Civil Disobedience* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1996): "[to] challenge the existing semiotic regime by replicating and redeploying it in a manner that offers participants in the projects a new way of seeing, understanding, and… interacting with a given system" (cited in Morrison 2013, 7).

create audiovisual works that "share the same quality of seduction that [those] interfaces possess". However, I would still recognize in their work a "resistance" facet as they produce a resignification of the space playing with digital trash aesthetics, not at all unreal. As Jennifer Walshe would say: "To dismiss the internet as trashy, fluffy and unreal is to dismiss life as trashy, fluffy and unreal" (Virtuallyreality, n.d.).

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SPAM (AN)ARCHIVE: PERFORMING UNDER SURVEILLANCE
(summary)

This paper offers an analysis of SoundTrieb's version of *[Custom #2] (a digital melodrama)*, written by the (post)composer and media artist Óscar Escudero in 2016. The particularity of this version, that took place within the project *SPAM (An)Archive* funded by the University of Bern and hosted by the Hochschule Luzern – Musik during the New Music Days, lies on a special requirement to both the composer and the performers: the usage of Facebook as a digital stage. Escudero, who currently works in team with the musicologist, dramatist and also (post)composer Belenish Moreno-Gil, always accompanies new productions of former pieces through BELOS Editions, a sort of editorial platform that mimics social media logic. Noticing that geolocation and data mining shape a new cosmology, to which social networks contribute as they are participative surveillance tools, this paper interrogates the political implications in social composing. Thus, the overarching question that resonated through the whole process was: is resistance possible at all? In order to answer this question, this paper discusses the process and aesthetical perspective behind social composing. First, it offers a brief introduction to DIY music and self-branding to understand the immediate digital context of both composers and interpreters. Second, it introduces the notion of "SPAM art" coined by Escudero himself, an aesthetical frame that enables critical thinking. A third section titled "Coded Representation" constitutes an analysis of SoundTrieb's production in the light of key concepts such as hypernarrative and melodrama. Anxiety and sadness are here central emotional features with emancipatory potential. The aim of the project was to create a space of critical dialogue and to fully exploit the sense of "usership" of Escudero and Moreno-Gil's works, involving musicians as more than mere interpreters in the making of a multimedia artwork. However, the most important outcome of this artistic experiment could be summarized as the need for more emancipated interpreters with intrinsic motivation and engagement in social debates. It is certain that the paper lacks an in-depth analysis of sound elements, as it is not the area of expertise by the author, but instead it reflects on different strata as important as the sonorous level in new interdisciplinary creation. As a conclusion, this article celebrates the disciplined disobedience in the artwork of Escudero and Moreno-Gil, as their model of usership reinterprets the existing power relations in platform capitalism while slipping in a subversive discourse.

Beyond the Main Theme

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RECYCLING POSTMODERNISM. TRENDSETTERS, TRENDS AND PANDORA, DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR VIOLA, CELLO AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (2022) BY LAZAR ĐORĐEVIĆ[1]

Abstract: *Pandora*, a double concerto for viola, cello and chamber orchestra was written by Lazar Đorđević (b. 1992) as the final work for his DMus degree, and premiered on 2 February 2022 in Belgrade. *Pandora* draws many parallels with the works by Đorđević's supervisor, Zoran Erić (b. 1950), one of the most prominent Serbian postmodern composers; yet, Đorđević's own "postmodernism" is very different from that of his predecessors. *Pandora* thus provides an opportunity to rethink various tendencies and trends among the Serbian composers of the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, which have left an imprint on the youngest generation, including the several interchanging "cycles" (or circles) of avant-garde and postmodernism. Has *Pandora,* with its sonic qualities and experimental drive, escaped the trends or actually reinforced them?

Keywords: avant-garde, postmodernism, sonic experiments, *Pandora*, double concerto, Lazar Đorđević.

Introduction

Lazar Đorđević was born in Kragujevac in 1992. Having completed secondary education in his hometown, he studied composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade with Prof. Zoran Erić. Đorđević completed his BMus and MMus degrees in 2014 and 2015 respectively and continued towards a doctorate in composition (DMus). He is a teaching assistant at the Department of Composition of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. *Pandora*, a double concerto for viola, cello and orchestra was written as the final work for his doctoral-artistic project. The concerto was premiered in the Russian Cultural Centre in Belgrade on 2 February 2022, and performed by eminent Serbian musicians: Saša Mirković (viola), Pavle Popović (cello), and ensemble *Metamorfosis* led by conductor Ivan Marković. Upon hearing this piece for the first time, during the extraordinary successful premiere, my thoughts were immediately drawn towards situating this piece within the (relatively) recent tendencies of Serbian contemporary music. In the written part of his doctoral artistic project, Đorđević has asserted that he was inspired by spectralism (fr. *musique spectrale*), more precisely, the works of Gérard Grisey (1946–1998), Tristan Murail (b. 1947) and Claude Vivier (1948–1983) (Đorđević 2022, 31), to embark on exploring harmonics and creating chords and micro-motivic entities based on frequencies derived from them (or "sonic qualities"). Yet a great amount of what I would designate as "Serbian postmodernist legacy" is present in *Pandora*, both at its formal and conceptual levels. *Pandora* does, in fact, sound like a postmodern piece, in the way postmodernism was defined in Serbian musicology (which we will discuss below). Đorđević's affinity for spectralism actually conforms to the "mainstream" postmodern compositional methodology,[2] but at the same time reveals the composer's desire to escape it. In order to determine the stylistic profile of Lazar Đorđević's *Pandora*, I will first overview various tendencies in Serbian music since the 1960s onwards, relying on selected musicological interpretations of Serbian music, which were often revised and reconsidered.

Over the past five to six decades, several trends have been identified in Serbian music; however, the same or similar tendencies have often been differently named or renamed — starting from the avant-garde and post-avant-garde, to post-avant-garde within postmodernism, and so on. Regardless of how they were labelled, these trends were transmitted from older to younger generations of composers, thus making Serbian music increasingly stale and predictable. In that environment, which, frankly speaking, has more-or-less survived until the

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2   For the definition of "postmodern compositional methodology" see: Veselinović-Hofman 1997 and 2007.

present day, Đorđević composed *Pandora*. Therefore, I am asking myself (and the rest of our academic community): is it possible for our young composers to free themselves from the "postmodern" trends and discover a different compositional method? Furthermore, by trying to reinterpret trends identifiable among the teachers at the Deparment of Composition of the Belgrade Faculty of Music, which were a great influence on Đorđević, I will also try to revise my own knowledge of these trends, acquired simultaneously with Đorđević's, but at the Department of Musicology. By doing this, I will also assess the teaching methods at the Faculty of Music over the past few decades.

Trends and Trendsetters (or, defining avant-garde and postmodernism in Serbia)

The generation born in the early 1990s, to which both Lazar Đorđević and I belong, was taught to think of the 1960s as some heroic, mythical time, when Serbian music experienced the so-called "Second Avant-Garde Wave".[3] By 1969, the year of publishing the iconic lexicon *Muzički stvaraoci u Srbiji* [Music Creators in Serbia] by Vlastimir Peričić (1927–2000)[4] and his associates, the avant-garde (and all other styles and trends) were only observed and described through the author's positivist analytical methodology. Peričić's review article "Tendencije razvoja srpske muzike posle 1945. godine" [Tendencies of the Development of Serbian Music after 1945], published posthumously (Peričić 2000), contains valuable information on Serbian music in the second half of the 20th century, but, again, mainly normative data on movements and trends in Serbian music. Such a non-committal, non-interpretive approach to writing on musical styles was very typical of Peričić and other writers of his generation — who were mainly educated as composers, not musicologists.

The first "trendsetter" who defined the avant-garde movements was Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, an actual musicologist. Her writings have been widely regarded as pioneering works, and future generations of musicologists were taught her theories as a "mandatory" framework through which contemporary music was interpreted. Hers was the first comprehensive study of avant-garde movements in Serbian music, which appeared in 1983: it was a revised version of

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3   This designation corresponds to the "First Avant-Garde Wave" from the 1930s. Many authors have written about these "two avant-gardes", but their interpretations vary: cf. Veselinović 1983, Peričić 2000, Milanović 2001, Marinković 2007, Veselinović-Hofman 2007, Masnikosa 2007, Popović Mlađenović 2007, Tomašević 2009.
4   Vlastimir Peričić (1927–2000) was a Serbian composer, music theorist, professor of Yugoslav Music History at the Music Academy/Faculty of Music in Belgrade, and a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Veselinović-Hofman's PhD dissertation, entitled *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avangarde u nas* [A Creative Presence of European Avant-garde in Our Country] (Veselinović 1983). By distinguishing between the avant-garde movements in music on the one hand, and avant-garde movements in literature and visual arts on the other, Veselinović developed her theory of musical avant-garde in central Europe (mainly around the 'axis' Schoenberg–Stockhausen), avant-garde tendencies in Polish and Hungarian music (Penderecki, Lutosławski, Ligeti), and France (from Debussy and Satie to Messiaen) (Veselinović 1983, 132–152). The main chapter is, of course, dedicated to Serbian avant-garde composers – from the representatives of the "First Avant-Garde Wave", via defining neoclassicism of the 1950s as avant-garde (in comparison to the socialist realism of the post-war period), to the avant-garde tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s (the "Second Avant-Garde Wave").

The "Second Avant-Garde Wave" of the 1960s was primarily marked by reflections on the works of Polish and Hungarian avant-garde composers – Penderecki, Lutosławski and Ligeti. The protagonists of the avant-garde in Serbia were: Petar Bergamo (1930–2022, a Croatian composer who studied in Belgrade and later taught at the Faculty of Music), Petar Osghian (1932–1979), Zoran Hristić (1938–2019), Rajko Maksimović (b. 1935), and Vladan Radovanović (b. 1932) (Veselinović 1983, 354–386).[5] Among these composers, Radovanović was the most curious about avant-garde possibilities (starting from 1956); around that time he also started exploring the concept of *sintezijska umetnost* [Art Synthesis], although he labelled it as such much later (cf. Janković 2003). According to Veselinović-Hofman, Radovanović's works inspired the so-called *Nova generacija* [New Generation] group, better known by their latter name, OPUS 4. Members of the group, which was active since the early 1970s, devoted themselves to musical minimalism and stood up against the academic, predominantly neoclassical norms (Veselinović 1983, 386–392.)

Veselinović also included three (then young) composers among the avant-gardists: her husband Srđan Hofman (1944–2021), Vlastimir Trajković (1947–2017) and Ivana Stefanović (b. 1948), but for different reasons. Hofman's works were described as avant-garde due to their (not always strict) application of serialist and aleatoric methods of composing; Trajković's works of the 1970s were avant-garde due to the "prolongation of time" and application of Messiaen's compositional techniques (sonority, modes, rhythmical patterns, etc.);[6] whereas Stefanović introduced a lyrical sentiment into her serialist/electronic pieces (Veselinović 1983, 392–406.) Veselinović's selection of avant-gardists also included

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5   For more information about avant-garde movements in Serbian music in the late 1950s and early 1960s see: Milin 1998.

6   Trajković was a student of Messiaen, albeit unofficially and only for a short period of time: cf. Janković-Beguš 2022.

'aleatoric composers' Vitomir Trifunović (1916–2007), Slobodan Atanacković (b. 1937) and Vuk Kulenović (1946–2017); 'contemporary-archaic composers' Rajko Maksimović, Vuk Kulenović and Ludmila Frajt (1919–1999); composers of electronic music, Vladan Radovanović, Josip Kalčić (1902–1995), Ludmila Frajt and Miloš Petrović (1952–2010) (Veselinović 1983, 407). Veselinović introduced the term *avangarda lokalnog tipa* [local avant-garde] to refer to the avant-gardes taking place outside of their primary geographical and temporal "centres" (Veselinović 1983, 33), thus legitimising all Serbian avant-garde endeavours, especially throughout 1970s.

However, already in 1984, Veselinović revised her assessment and described the aforementioned 1970s avant-garde reflections as post-avant-garde, because they embodied a compromise between avant-garde and tradition:

> There is something awkward in that alliance between an avant-garde artist and a fashion designer, joined together in the figure of a former avant-gardist. Rather than being mutually exclusive, the self-confidence of an avant-garde arbitrator as a characteristic of the former, and a lack of concern for the destructive attitude towards the tradition of the latter, reach a settlement. The compromise that succeeded after avant-garde art is grotesque, but still welcome; paradoxical, yet healing. This situation found its strongest impulse precisely within the auspices of the avant-garde, as a consequence of its involvement with tradition. (Veselinović 1984, 5)

Within one year, Veselinović-Hofman contradicted herself: the 1970s avant-garde became post-avant-garde. Ever since, the "actual" Serbian avant-garde was "limited" to the active composers and their works from the 1960s, whereas everything created from the 1970s onwards got the prefix "post-" (see: Veselinović-Hofman 2007).

So, with her 1984 article Veselinović acknowledged the new tendencies in European music of the 1970s, starting from the new simplicity of Penderecki, which was embraced by the likes of Osghian, Berislav Popović (1931–2002), Trifunović, Hofman, et al. However, in 1990, Veselinović-Hofman revised her assessment again, labelling them as postmodernists:

> The definition of post-modernism is too extensive for a thorough explanation in this paper. The term is used here to indicate musical trends which occurred chronologically from the beginning of the ninghteen [sic!] seventies to the present day – that is, from the time of the most recent musical avant-garde. Post-modernism includes not only post-avant-garde trends, but also all other musical activity taking place in this period. Post-avant-garde in this context, refers to music by composers who were directly involved in the avant-garde movement of the 1960s (Veselinović-Hofman 1990, 133.)

Thus, the post-avant-garde trends of the 1970s (or the 'avant-garde-in-decline'?) became a faction within postmodernism. Veselinović-Hofman took this a step further with her 1997 monograph *Fragmenti o muzičkoj postmoderni* [Fragments on Musical Postmodernity]. The focus of the book is the notion of avant-garde and its relation to tradition. The four fractions of postmodernism – the affirmative-compromising (self)critique of avant-garde, the radical-negative (self)critique of avant-garde, the non-avant-garde (i.e., neoclassical) music and its gradual transition to postmodernism, and a soft plurality of postmodernism – describe the various relationships between avant-garde and tradition (Veselinović-Hofman 1997, 51–132). The list of postmodernists is mostly the same as those previously considered post-avant-gardists of the 1970s, but with added younger composers, born in the 1950s up to 1970 (Goran Kapetanović, 1969–2014, Miloš Zatkalik, b. 1959, Zoran Erić, b. 1950, Tatjana Milošević, b. 1970).

Another turn in Veselinović-Hofman's definition of the avant-garde in Serbia took place in 2002, with her text "Teze za reinterpretaciju jugoslovenske muzičke avangarde" [Theses for the Reinterpretation of Yugoslav Musical Avant-Garde"], where she stated that "music knows, at the end, only one undeniable historical avant-garde, embodied in John Cage's work *4'43"* for…" (Veselinović-Hofman 2002, 21).[7] In this article Veselinović-Hofman articulated three avant-gardes: avant-garde in literature, visual and performing arts (historical avant-garde); avant-garde music; and Serbian (local) avant-garde.[8]

The hypothesis in the form of questions follows: if avant-garde is directly linked to the critique of institutions (see: Birger 1998), which never happened in its most extreme way in Serbian music,[9] and if the compositional techniques were reflections on avant-garde movements, was there ever Serbian avant-garde music? Is post-1945 musical avant-garde in Serbia reduced to the works of Vladan Radovanović (see: Medić 2019), minimalist, yet aggressively critical group OPUS 4, gathered around Students' Cultural Centre in Belgrade (see: Tošić 2001) and experimental works of Ernő Király (1919–2007, see: Milojković et al. 2021)? Revising my own insights, I declare: If the defining feature of the avant-garde is the critique of society, and its cultural and artistic institutions, to the annoyance of conservative critics, then the answers to the two questions are – yes, there was Serbian avant-garde after World War II, and yes, it has to

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7   The notion of historical avant-garde should be considered in Bürger's sense of that term (see: Birger 1998).

8   This was discussed and summarised in Bojana Rasovanović's article "Contemporary Musicology in a Neither/Nor State. Challenging the Status of Music(ologic)al Periphery" (Radovanović 2021).

9   The majority of composers worked either at the Academy of Music, later Faculty of Music in Belgrade, or at Radio Belgrade – there was no critique of or separation from mainstream institutions.

be reduced to the aforementioned composers. Everyone else, within the period from 1960 to the present day, represents some sort of (moderated) modernism or postmodernism.

Pandora had kept her box well, someone else opened it

Lazar Đorđević's hometown, Kragujevac is the main centre of accordion performance in Serbia and also the first town in Serbia where it was possible to study accordion on a high education level – initially within the separate unit of the Faculty of Music, and later at the Music Department of the Philological-Artistic Faculty (FILUM) of the University of Kragujevac. Therefore, Đorđević quickly found his niche and became one of the most prominent Serbian composers for accordion, writing several standout pieces such as *Memoria in aeterna*, a concerto for accordion and orchestra (2017),[10] *I once heard, somewhere…* for clarinet, accordion and string quartet (2016), and *Lunar dust* for accordion solo (2021). On the other hand, Đorđević's interest in string instruments is likely related to the existence of a great number of excellent performers, who originated from the School for Musical Talents in Ćuprija (a town in central Serbia, near Kragujevac). Both soloists who played at the premiere of *Pandora*, the acclaimed violist Saša Mirković, nowadays a Full Professor at the FILUM, and the young cellist Pavle Popović, were also educated in Ćuprija. Lazar Đorđević himself said that *Pandora*, along with his pieces that preceded it (*Quasi Sonata* for cello, 2017, *D-Madness* for viola and fifteen strings, 2019, and *Paradox* subtitled "duo for viola solo", 2019), is a result of his long-term interest in the sonic possibilities of string instruments (Đorđević 2022, 2.) This fascination with string instruments can also be regarded as the "legacy" of his composition teacher Zoran Erić and his notable works for strings: *Off* for contrabass and strings (1982), *Cartoon* for strings and harpsichord ad libitum (1984), *Talea Konzertstück* for violin and strings (1989), and *Helium in a Small Box – Images of Chaos III*, for violin and strings (1991).[11]

Ever since he started writing concertos for various instruments, Đorđević was fascinated with solo cadences. Although the composer experimented with the genre and form of a concerto, in *Pandora*, the treatment of the orchestral parts (reduced to 27 individual parts – treated almost as solo parts), the timbral and technical varieties and possibilities, microtonality, the individuality of instruments and full orchestral sound, as well as an implementation of new

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10   It was performed alongside *Pandora* in February 2022, by Darko Dimitrijević as a soloist on the accordion, the ensemble Metamorfosis and conductor Ivan Marković.

11   For more information about Erić's works see: Premate 1984, Trajković 1989, Nikolić 2007, Novaković 2017.

sonic solutions are explored within orchestra with all the standard instrument groups, yet featuring non-standard employment of instruments (Đorđević 2022, 3). Alongside the soloists, the ensemble consists of I flute/piccolo, II flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion (marimba, kettle-drums, bass drum, gong, cymbal, woodblocks, triangle, rattle), and strings.

Regarding the formal analysis, Đorđević proposed a set of "fields" (*polja*). Inside of each field, there are parts and sections. In the ensuing analysis I will highlight the qualities of each field.

Field I, mm. 1–94

Starting from the opening measures, Đorđević presents his sonic arsenal. A short cluster-like formation (measure 1) quickly unites around the tone C (in different octaves), which, as Đorđević claims, is one of the fundamental pitches of this double concerto. Starting from m. 2, a set of "sonic variations" on the tone c1 appears, both in woodwinds and solo parts. These "sonic variations" quickly expand into a vibrating, rhythmically fluid colour-changing cluster, with surfacing tremolos in the solo parts. Starting from m. 25, a different, micropolyphonic cluster appears. This formation is enriched with strong, almost dance-like impulses, embodied in accentuated chords in brass, percussion, II violins and violas. As the section progresses, the orchestral parts are "silenced down", and turned into a mechanical rhythm machine (m. 39). This contrasts and thus emphasises the permanently changing virtuoso sonic qualities of the soloists. At m. 58 the rhythmically fluid cluster, surfacing throught the solo parts, finally returns, and through this orchestral texture the first field ends at m. 94.

Solo cadence No. 1 – viola, m. 95 (ad libitum, senza misura)

This first solo cadence summarises the sonic qualities of the various techniques employed in the solo viola part: tremolos performed in different dynamics and bow positions, glissandos, trills, etc.

Field II, mm. 96–229

Characterised by development, field II consists of combining the two cluster types from Field I. Starting from m. 197, by extracting several micro-motivic excerpts, Đorđević creates an almost post-minimalist texture by repeating/varying them melodically.[12] This becomes the feature of the solo viola part at m. 220. Other parts are eliminated one by one, or continue to play high-pitched "noises".

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12   Post-minimalist in this case refers to the repetition of fragments or micro-motivic entities, but without any sort of reduction.

Field III, mm. 230–379

The "second development" of the concerto is based on the repetitiveness of micro-motivic entities within a cluster. This is a result of providing more of a dance-like vertical accent and impulses which gradually dominate the cluster-based horizontal flow.

Solo cadence No. 2 – cello, m. 380 (ad libitum, senza misura)

Similarly, to the first cadence for viola, the second cadence summarises techniques of various sonic effects on the cello.

Field IV, mm. 380–518

Closing the developmental "arch" started in Field II, Đorđević emphasises the repetitive features of micro-motivic entities. Each micro-motive or sonic quality embodying a certain technique is submerged into a post-minimalist fragment repetition, but through ever-changing sonic qualities (that is, different techniques.)

Coda & double cadence, mm. 518–553

This Coda summarises micro-motivic entities, the possibilities to create a cluster or a post-minimalist repetitive texture, as well as sonic possibilities and performance technique possibilities. One could call it an apotheosis of sound.

Did Pandora Manage to Close the Box? Did the Cycles of (Post) Avant-Gardes/Postmodernisms End?

Pandora's inclination towards spectralism, that is, experimenting with various sonic qualities – at least as an idea applied in the concerto – represents a step forward in Serbian art music, having in mind that not many composers delt with it. Alongside this step forward, some postmodernist features as described by Veselinović-Hofman remained: clusters are not just sound masses. They have gone through the postmodern transformation, with the appearance of micro-motivic entities, but also through the employment of various sonic (instead of melodic) qualities. Had there been no microtonality and derivation of chords and micro motivic entities from the aliquot row, the piece would have remained completely in the postmodern realm. It is worth noting that the clusters are almost always precisely written in the score (excluding glissandos, and sings for playing the highest possible note), which in itself is probably a result of the composer's thinking about sonic/post-minimalist cluster transformations.

The postmodern/post-minimalist tendencies of *Pandora* are nevertheless strongly audible and visible – one cannot (at least I could not) shake the feeling

that *Pandora* is, in its conception, form, and structure somewhat familiar. Truth be said, one can hardly escape one's roots and the surroundings – and this is something that can be said for many composers and musicologists in Serbia. To break the cycle traditionally taught at the Faculty of Music, Đorđević explored various performance techniques for the purpose of achieving different sonic qualities. A modification of cluster sound is, at the same time out of fashion and a 'must-have'. A suggestive title (Pandora here, apparently has a sonic box opened), and its reference to 'opening' tones and their harmonics (meticulously calculated up to the harmonic No. 32) used for chords and micro-motivic entities, should (or, should it?) be replaced suggestive and intuitive composing. We are still in a never-ending cycle trying to find a way out. We are being told what to accept (in both art, and humanities wise) as new, trendy, or correct. *Pandora* stands on some sort of border of potential possibilities, deeply rooted in postmodern trends, which are themselves rooted in avant-garde trends – reflection after reflection on something that happened sometime in the past (but we do not know which exact past). In the context (and micro-contexts) of contemporary Serbian music, this was almost inevitable. Yet, *Pandora* tries to look forward, as if being drawn back. One should keep looking for answers – exploring all types of music worldwide, as much as possible – and step bravely into the new sound realms.

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PERMANENTNO KRUŽENJE POSTMODERNIZMA. TRENDOVI, TRENDSETERI I *PANDORA*, DVOSTRUKI KONCERT ZA VIOLU, VIOLONČELO I OKRESTAR LAZARA ĐORĐEVIĆA
(rezime)

Nešto više od poslednjih pet decenija, u srpskoj muzci uočljivi su pojedini trendovi koji su vremenom menjali svoja imena. Počev od avangarde i postavangarde, do postavangarde u okviru postmodernizma, identični trendovi prenosili su se od originalnih aktera (kompozitora) na mlađe kompozitorske generacije. Kako se ispostavlja, avangarda od koje je sve počelo, a koja je u velikoj meri bila refleksija na ostvarenja kompozitora takozvane „poljske škole", letimično i principa serijalne muzike, počela je da upija elemente tradicije u sebe (profilisanje tradicionalne fakture – teme, harmonije, forme i tako dalje), postavši postavangarda. Ubrzo potom, postavangarda je, usled različitih izvora kompozitorske inspiracije (avangardne i tradicionalne) postala deo veće formacije, muzičke postmoderne.

U takvoj sferi, koja, može se slobodno reći, traje i do danas, iako je već više puta među filozofima, teoretičarima umetnosti, pa i muzikolozima, postavljana teza o kraju postmoderne, nastala je i kompozicija *Pandora*, dvostruki koncert za violu i violončelo (2022) Lazara Đorđevića. Stoga, problematizovali smo pitanje: Da li je moguće izaći iz postmodernističkog kruženja i pronaći drugačiju stvaralačku logiku? Dvostruki koncert Lazara Đorđevića, kao jedan od mogućih izlaza, sadrži istraživanje zvučne boje. Istovremeno, autor teksta sporadično revidira i svoje muzikološko znanje, pokušavajući da, ako ništa drugo, redefiniše sopstveni balast naučnog nasleđa.

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A MUSICAL ANALOGUE WITH BLURRED SPACE IN MY ERHU SOLO *FIREWORKS*[1]

Abstract: This paper discusses my recent erhu solo project *Fireworks* which is a musical analogue that I analyse using Chuang Tzu's blurred aesthetics to investigate a musical space between determinacy and indeterminacy in Chinese national music. What is particularly interesting to me about this blurred musical space is that it is not polarised around an idea of 'the invisible' or 'the indefinable' as pure negative space but can be perceived in a more graduated area between positive and negative, fixed and unstable. Behind this concept of musical space is the creation of an 'interpenetrated' identity, a fluctuating boundary between opposing qualities, or the subject's and object's identities. In seeking to find structural analogues congruent with the concept of the blur, the challenges and focus of this work rely upon the architecture of ambivalent states, which include string timbre and frequency, the relations of determinacy-indeterminacy, space and spacing architecture, performative indeterminacy and fragments, and silence. This focus of this research into a

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musical engagement with blurred aesthetics has allowed me to examine how I might approach musical structure, specifically by the framing of events or phenomena, and by expanding my musical language and creative ideas..

Keywords: Blurred, Indeterminacy, Musical space, Harmony, Erhu.

INTRODUCTION

Pre-study – The Daoist Aesthetics of blurring
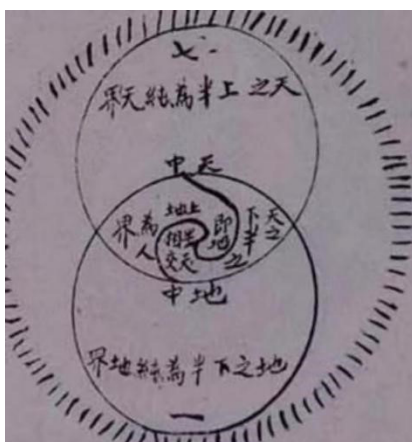
Blurred: space fusion, gap, sensitive relationship

Figure 1. Tai Chi heaven and earth cross map

Definition of blurred

My research began by exploring music similar to Chuang Tzu's[2] blur aesthetics, which is understood as constellations of knowledge about sensitive space and time in the process of change. Chinese scholars pointed out the harmony advocated by Chuang Tzu as the state of integration of multiple spaces, namely man, heaven and earth. Chuang Tzu used music as a metaphor to achieve the

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2   Chuang Tzu had a unique position among the early Chinese thinkers. He believed that the experience of musical harmony is ineffable and non-representational, transcends the boundaries of the human world, and needs to empty one's mind and inner feelings (Rogacz 2022).

ideal state of harmonious aesthetics (Liu 2007). Man and nature merge into one to achieve a natural harmony. Chinese architecture realises the communication between man and nature, such as the structure of the Suzhou garden window view and rockery, which attaches importance to borrowing scenery and pursues the harmonious structure of the integration of man and scenery.

Chinese music historians indicate that the 'harmony' in the music theory of Chuang Tzu not only involves the meaning of music discipline, but also has the meaning of psychology. This concept is further extended from music theory to social ethics and even philosophical thought (Xiu 1980). This harmony has both objective and subjective meanings and can be understood as the process or the interval of the fusion of two or more spaces between determinacy and indeterminacy. Determinacy can be interpreted as a dynamically active space of music that can be sensed. Indeterminacy can be interpreted as an opening musical space with unpredictable qualities. Rest and transition in Chinese national music are also intervals between notes or sounds, and the blurring state that rest and transition present is exactly what Chinese artists are pursuing. 'Blurred' is a description of the changes within this harmonious process as a subjective, empirical term, suggesting a general mode of experience in which different spaces are simultaneously and identically perceived and fixed. At the same time, I used analogous blur as a tool of music interpretation in the way that Professor Philip Thomas understood indeterminacy: works that are under the banner of indeterminacy include composers who are often referred to as The New York School, namely Earle Brown, John Cage, and Morton Feldman. Their use of indeterminacy as a notational and technical device derives from an individual aesthetic that was undoubtedly shaped by developments within their colleagues' music, and has particular implications for the understanding and interpretation of their works (Philip 2007).

Questions that I pose in this article include: What is in the blur? How does the blur happen and what impact does it have? How do compositional intentions and performance possibilities interact in the blur? These kinds of research questions do not seem to be the mainstream research in Chinese academia. Professor Vladimir V. Maliavin's description of the difference between Chinese Taoism and Western process transformation helps to illustrate what sensitivity means in this harmonious space and time:

> Daoist intentionality is therefore the passage from the indefinite Mind to the definite one, from no-limit to the great limit. Contrary to the Western notion of intentionality, it has no objective contents. It is a pure creativity marking the limits of things or moments of transformation, the 'in-between' spaces. Oscillating between the pulsating continuum and the continuum of pulsation, it represents a pure affectivity, an eternal reaction, a course of self-cause, and thus an inexhaustible effi-

ciency. What is the prototype of this movement of deferring/returning which leaves no visible trace and yet brings about qualitative change? I think we should look for it in the kinaesthetic unity of the living body that makes possible all finite movements. (Maliavin 2008)

Other Compositional Articulations of Blurring

Borrowing from Maliavin (2008), the blurred space of Daoism is not only something objectively located in space or time interval. The blurred space is where the boundary between determinacy and indeterminacy or more different worlds are empirically continuous and moving. At the same time, it is realised that the fusion of opposites is the combination of the cognition of sensitivity with the cognition of the individual, and is related to the flow of time. This is clearly shown in the Daoist blurred diagram (Tai Chi map of heaven and earth), which includes the heaven and earth and the intersecting human world (Figure 1.1). Although the human world (the fused part) presupposes something intangible and concrete, the fluctuations of factors within it indicate the existence of something unstable or undefined.

What I'm particularly interested in is that blurred space is a more progressive area that can be perceived between positive and negative, between fixed and unstable. Behind this concept, there is a sensitivity in the fluctuating boundaries between opposing qualities, or identities of subjects and objects. Referring to work of philosopher Alfred Whitehead and the form of process as an infinite state of complex relations helped me to think about Chuang Tzu's blurred space in one way:

> Process has a sense of rhythm. In this way, creative activity has a natural pulsation and each pulsation forms a natural unit of historical fact. The interweaving of data, form, transformation, and result is characteristic of every factual unit. In the historical world and its formal sphere, every fact, when fully realized, has an infinite number of relations. These relations are the cosmic view of this fact. To fully understand these abstracted relations, we must accordingly delve into the infinity of these relationships (Alfred 2019).

There is also sensitivity in infinity. Thus, the blurring space can be understood as an individual's cognitive space created by sensitivities within the interaction of the subjective/internal and the objective/external world within a given framework after fusion.

For this researcher, the blurring ideas of Chuang Tzu, Maliavin and Whitehead inspired me to study contemporary Chinese national instrumental music

with a Chinese traditional music background and western modern music language from different perspectives that are analogues congruent with the concept of blur, through the interpretation of the sensitivity of the interaction between subjective and objective.

Due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the progress of this research was greatly affected. I have restructured the research as a self-collaboration through a project named *Fireworks* in which I seek to amplify the personal cognition or evaluation behaviour brought by the interaction between internal and external space in the structure of contradictory states, in order to explore the role and change of sensitivity in the interactive space. As a solo erhu project, this study can be seen as the early stage to explore ideas to be further developed in different forms of musically framing a situation in which subtle changes in performance mode reflect the performer's changing sensibilities and blurred music space for performance changes.

STRING TIMBRE AND FREQUENCY

Source of Inspiration and Space for Expansion

In September 2020, *Fireworks* artist Cai Guoqiang carried out the project titled *The Birth of Tragedy* (Figure 2.1) on the Charonde River in Cognac, France. The theme of the artwork is related to my own work and thus aroused my interest. The transition and fusion presented in *Fireworks* are the presentation of the blurred space, which is similar to the way I simulate the blurred space with music.

The 'Cursive' of the Second Act (Figure 2.2) also expresses a celebration of the spirit of freedom. What I find particularly interesting is how transitional fusion affected the *Fireworks* piece to present a changing effect. The degenerative process of smoke in a space that gradually disappears as the sound goes on is very important. Once the smoke has disappeared, it eventually exists as clear, persisting in a blurred space element that is not a single occurrence but complex and changeable. The overlapping of tone colour space and the interweaving, enlarging, and expanding of blurred space reveals the relationship between the elements of space.

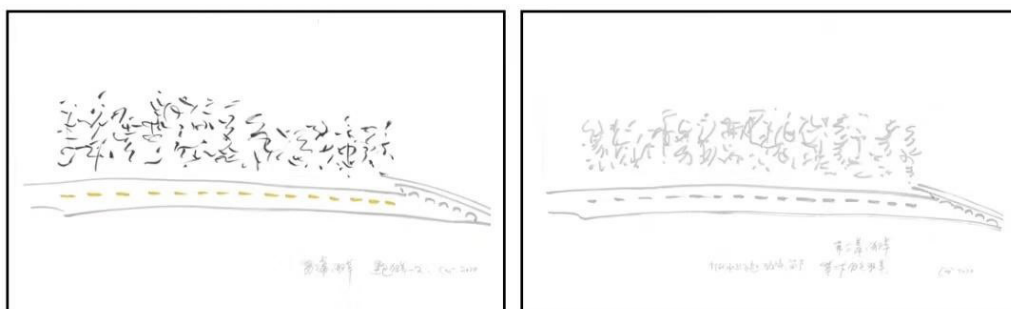**Figure 2.1.** Cai Guoqiang, The Birth of Tragedy, 2020.

Figure 2.2. Manuscript by Cai Guoqiang, The 'Cursive' of the Second Act.

Determinacy-Indeterminacy

The concept of blurring space is further enhanced through the relation between determinate-indeterminate durational space. While the determinate space is defined as a count, as measurable, standardised, or objective time, the extended transitional representation of the space in Figure 2.3 provides the participant with a more sensitive space defined within a context-given framework. The transitions and extensions of string kneading in erhu performance are individual behaviours generated by the interaction of subjective and objective factors. Changes in the speed and strength of string kneading can record subtle differences in interpretative subjective sensitivity.
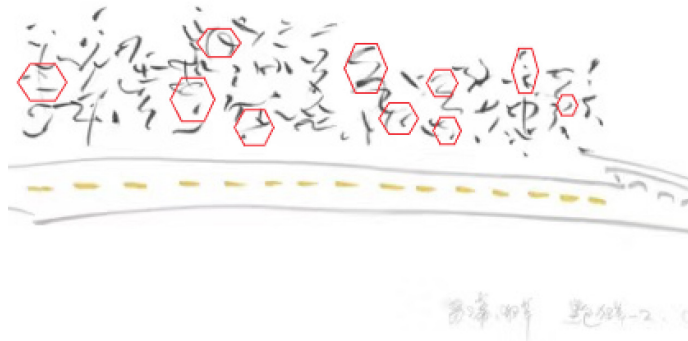
Figure 2.3. Manuscript by Cai Guoqiang, Black Cursive, The 'Cursive' of the Second Act.

In Figure 2.3, I first translated the pre-set intermediate space and interval energy in the sketch and circled the disappearing process space between certainty and uncertainty. The red space is then transformed from left to right into ten acoustic forms in accordance with the writing order of calligraphy. In order to focus on the exploration and association of the blurred space and in addition to the changes in the space and spacing of the red graphics, I also magnified the presentation of the performance technology upon the timbre of the instrument to show what kind of spatial feeling that the combination of different timbre states of the same pitch will bring. I then set three modes: F (fast kneading, sustained sound, and dense frequency); S (slow kneading, sustained sound, and loose frequency); and K (compound: weak to strong or strong to weak). Each mode thus becomes an independent space and the independent crosses are mixed, so that there will be a total of six found forms: F, S, K, FS, FK, and SK. Finally, I combined these different playing methods and spatial rhythms of sound types and presented a map of sound forms (Table 1). The purpose of this setting is to provide an opportunity to compare and record the nuances of the final sound effect within a given framework.

Table 1. Different letter combinations in the column represent different sound forms.

	Bars	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	11	16	17
F		1									1
S			2					1		2	
K				1							
FS					1	1					
FK							2		2		
SK											1

The sound effect is set according to the track of strokes in Figure 2.3. The thick strokes are similar to the sound intensity, while the strokes that are dissipated are similar to the sound that is loose. The lines indicate the order, position, and frequency of the appearance of the sound form (i.e., the number of times that the form appears in each bar).

Table 1 was arranged according to the spacing that appears in the space in Figure 2.3. For example, it can be found that the sound form of FK appears twice in bar 7. According to the interpretation of the symbols in Table 1, FK represents the combination of fast kneading and compound type, and the sound form presentation on the music score (Figure 2.4) is found to be consistent.

Figure 2.4. *Fireworks*, fr. II, bar 7.

The development of single timbre, for example in Tan Dun's Orchestra *Theatre* commissioned by Japan's Santori Hall, is referred to here. The entire song takes the 'Re' sound, fixed pitch as the centre, and embellishes the 'Re' sound through different octave homophone transformations, different durations, different playing methods, different timbres and different grace note forms. Although such a setting fully excavates the timbre and acoustics of a single note 'Re', this specific strategy seems to be due to the fact that the fixation of single notes cannot adequately record the subtle differences caused by subjective sensitivities between the score and the performers. I used the combination of different variations of different tones to try to explore differences in subjective sensitivity control under a given framework and amplify the influence of sensitivity on timbre.

SPACE AND SPACING ARCHITECTURE

In order to communicate with blurred musical space, I created an interaction of conflicting expressions – subjective and objective, spatial and temporal – what is referred to in Mazzolini's words as, "a disturbing and acentric panorama in which nearby and distant, above and below, before and after are no longer clearly separated, but rather mixed with one another in a perennial diaspora of forms" (Mazzolini 2013). In this painting, I created subjective conflicts and col-

lisions with blurred space to provide performers with the opportunity to practice performing around sensitivity to time changes.

From the perspective of the expression of positive and negative space, these spaces are opposed to each other and negative can be defined as silent. In the open time, the performers create the consciousness of switching back and forth between the positive and the negative, which can be regarded as a transition space. In the case of a more open space, the sensitivity of the performers' interpretations creates a sense of conflict of change.

The performer's inner sense of counting is influenced by the indeterminate continuous silence as indicated by a long fermata symbol right before the bar. After the countable tempo, there is an immeasurable transition space within which subjective definitions of 'short, normal, and longer' is changed by the tempo as well as the expressive sensitivity of the gestural movements entering the transition space, i.e., the very long silence after the gesture of the glissandi along the erhu string at the end of bar 9 (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. *Fireworks*, fr. III, bar 1–10.

However, it is not only the connections of each space that are involved. The context or position across the phrases, fragments and instrumental transitions can have interaction. In terms of the structure of the whole work, I use the free connection and combination of nine fragments so that space is not the only interrelated aspect. A compound of determinate-indeterminate transitional spaces allows the performer to consider space and spacing across micro and macro scales.

For example, in fragment IV, V, VI (Figure 3.2), the combination of the Chinese national mode and Dorian mode is provided as the basis, and the performer uses the cyclic mode of changing instruments to play overlapping extended tones, fermatas, and gestures to connect the sections. Figure 3.2 shows the way gestures are handled between the three materials and how the performance revolves around the meaning of this relationship. Fragment IV features the trill

gestures of erhu and gaohu. In fragment V, the continual staccato gestures of erhu and gaohu are shown. In fragment VI, the glissandi gestures of the erhu and gaohu link the rhythmic coordination between the two instruments as well as the subjective sensitivity of freely choosing when to change instruments.

Figure 3.2. *Fireworks*, fr. IV, V, VI.

PERFORMATIVE INDETERMINACY

In addition to sound forms and fermata symbols, the work also uses different layers to express indeterminacy and thus enhances the sense of space and spacing. I decided to borrow notation similar to improvisation as a part of this movement, to construct the overall structure in an unknown and different way. In terms of the structure of music, the main material comes from the previous part of the piece. I have adopted the approach of multi-layered lines where the performer can negotiate the polyphonic material in the sheet music by himself and determine the direction of the music. The polyphonic material here adopts a variation form similar to that of Jiangnan Sizhu, which is a practical attempt to combine improvisation from traditional Chinese music with improvisation from modern music (Figure 4.1). This practice has provided me with an indeterminate and more flexible approach to expression. As a result, the interdependence between the melody lines becomes transitional but still relevant because the performers' decisions depend on their interpretation of the performance situation.

Figure 4.1. *Fireworks*, fr. VII, bar 1–12.

FRAGMENTS AND SILENCE

This work consists of fragmentary fragments and silent connection. What I am trying to create with this fragmented structure is "one against an infinite number of sounds or sound forms... Together they comprise the entire complexity of life" (Frey, n.d.). In *Fireworks*, each fragmentary section is connected by silence in the form of various fermatas, some of which even include the movement of changing instruments. This structural pattern of indeterminate durational negative space in between specific musical phenomena was a way for me to explore forms of blurred musical space – the deconstruction of the cause and effect of sensitive interpretation.

Silence is used as a strategy of opening up subjectively sensitive structural space related to the situation and environment for performers and audiences. For me, this is an exploration of personal ideas and a constitutive analogy of Chuang Tzu's aesthetics. Silence is like a gateway into an ever-changing moment, and a rich world emerges. Similarly, Evan Johnson's work blurs the threshold between sound and silence. In the four high voices of his Vo Mesurando (2012), "the music reaches a point of almost total erasure" (Rutherford-Johnson 2017). As the composer explains in the programme notes, "the material and energies of the work are 'private', quite often simply inaudible" (Johnson, cited in Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 178).

CONCLUSION

The practice of my work *Fireworks* presents a musical analogue with blurred space and suggests how I and perhaps others can deal with the structure of music, especially in regard to the framework of events or phenomena. The process of set string timbre and frequency allows us to record subtle differences in subjective sensitivity. The space and spacing architecture provides more opportunities regarding subjective sensitivity to spacing, new methods of spatial treatment, and increased improvisation for performers to develop a performance practice. Here, performance behaviour is not only expressed in the present but also has a dynamic relationship with the past and future. In my opinion, the participation is not just a personal one: it is also characterised by a shared or cooperative participation that makes the performance scenes blend with each other in an intimate manner. Through these active intervals and time changes, this memory structure can free and blur connections that move beyond a more static or flat way of thinking and in order to understand the blurred musical space or spacing that can lead to a performance with an unpredictable quality. My intention is not

to invent a new musical language, nor to establish a musical language symbol system. Through the process of musical practice, I seek to realise the pursuit of blurred musical space and invite new creative ideas.

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A MUSICAL ANALOGUE WITH BLURRED SPACE IN MY ERHU SOLO
FIREWORKS
(summary)

The erhu solo project *Fireworks* is a musical analogue that I analyse using Chuang Tzu's blurred aesthetics to investigate the musical space between determinacy and indeterminacy in Chinese national music, especially under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, to explore my self-collaborative performing arts practice. In the Daoist view, the experience of music and harmony is ineffable, non-concrete, and transcends the realm of man (Rogacz 2022). Harmony for Chuang Tzu is beyond observable nature and reaches the way it is inherent. Pursuing harmony requires infinite transcendence and transformation. While the Daoist endorsement of harmony has been discussed in early Chinese thinkers' philosophy, the function and understanding of 'blurred-in' harmony has hardly been explored. What is in the blur? How does the blur happen and what impact does it have? How do compositional intentions and performance possibilities interact in the blur? To answer these questions, we analyse how different scholars have interpreted the concept. Daoist intentionality is therefore the passage from the indefinite Mind to the definite one, from no limit to the great limit. Contrary to the Western notion of intentionality, it has no objective content. It is pure creativity marking the limits of things or moments of transformation, the 'in-between' spaces. (Maliavin 2008). 'Blurred' is a description of the changes within this harmonious process as a subjective, empirical term, suggesting a general mode of experience in which different spaces are simultaneously and identically perceived and fixed.

This article communicates with blurred music space from four aspects. The string timber and frequency provide the participant with a more sensitive space defined within a context-given framework. The string kneading in erhu performance not only shows the interaction of subjective and objective factors but also records the subtle differences in interpretive subjective sensitivity. Space and spacing architecture creates an interaction of conflicting expressions – subjective and objective, spatial and temporal. In the case of more open space, the sensitivity of the performers' interpretations establishes a sense of conflict of change. In performative indeterminacy, I decided to borrow notation similar to improvisation as a part of this movement, the interdependence between the melody lines becomes transitional but still relevant because the performers' decisions depend on their interpretation. In fragments and silence, silence is used as a strategy for opening up subjectively sensitive structural space related to the situation and environment for performers and audiences.

We can conclude that the participation of subjective sensitivities in the blurred musical space provides more performance poetically. Participation is not only a personal one but also characterised by shared or cooperative participation that makes the performance scenes blend with each other in an intimate manner. Through these active intervals and time changes, this memory structure can free and blur connections that move beyond a more static or flat way of thinking in order to understand the blurred musical space or spacing that can lead to a performance with an unpredictable quality.

Reviews

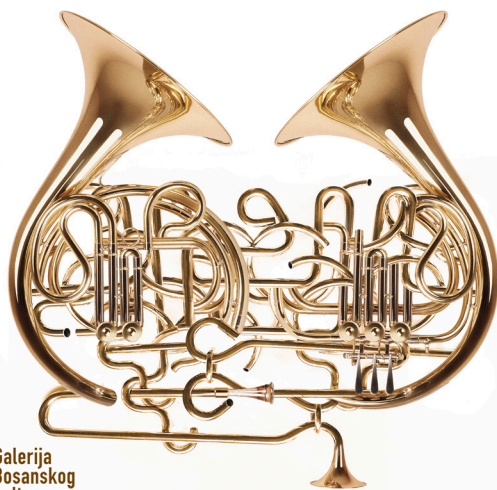**Aida Adžović***
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

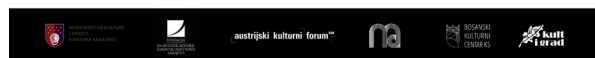# SONEMUS FEST 2022: Transcultural Sonic Entanglement in the Disentangling World

The Society of New Music (SONEMUS) is an association founded in Sarajevo in 2001 with the aim of creating a platform for performance, promotion, and education in the field of contemporary artistic music. Motivated by initial ideas, this organization has established the SONEMUS Fest, the only festival of this kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a crucial element of a global contemporary music network, the SONEMUS team today brings together internationally renowned composers and performers.

With the outstanding efforts of two key figures, Ališer Sijarić (artistic director) and Hanan Hadžajlić (executive director), from 15 to 19 October 2022, the first post-pandemic edition was held with a full capacity. The program of a five-day event, organized with the sup-

port of the University of Sarajevo – Academy of Music and the Bosnian Cultural Centre Sarajevo, included lectures and workshops by eminent composers and performers, as well as three concerts, which took place as major events.

SONEMUS Fest 2022 was realized under the name *(Dis)entanglement*. As stated in the program notes, the meaning of this term, which in quantum mechanics denotes the moment of the irreversible detachment of the perfect correlation between particles, entangled by their physical properties (position, momentum, spin, and polarization), became a model for the organization of musical structures, as well as a metaphor for the global historical moment we are living in. The perpetual shift of pandemics, wars, economic crises, and the rise of nationalism and other anti-universalistic ideologies are the symptoms of the disentanglement of globalized liberal capitalism.

The idea of framing the works by different generations of composers and performers, their specific aesthetic perspectives, and authentic artistic micro-universes as a reflection of the diversities of the disentangling world was the starting point in creating the concert program. However, all the compositions correlate with the tendency to rethink and recreate the current political, social, scientific, or artistic issues which create a global reality.

The three concerts took place from 17 to 19 October in the Gallery of the Bosnian Cultural Center Sarajevo. The performance of the innovative and versatile Austrian ensemble PHACE marked the first one. On this occasion, eminent musicians and members of this chamber group, Ivana Pristasova Zaugg (violin), Roland Schueler (cello), and Mathilde Hoursiangou (piano), appeared as a trio and demonstrated a high-level interpretation with marked precision and sensitivity for sound nuance.

Photo: Vanja Čerimagić

The repertoire included works by internationally established composers such as Reinard Fuchs, the artistic and executive director of this ensemble, and Online Sijarić, as well as the pieces by Hanan Hadžajlić, Clara Iannotta and Daniela Terranova, up-and-coming composers on the European contemporary music scene.

At the very beginning, PHACE performed Fuch's *Tox* for violin, cello, and piano (2012/22). The piece's title is derived from the *tox,* a word that appears in many languages with different meanings. Based on this concept of similarities, several ideas, figures and sounds keep recurring while they change their shape. The program featured *Capriccio Meccanico* for violin and piano (2000) by Online Sijarić. The nucleus is one melodic-rhythmic phrase during which the formal principle of composition continuously repeats the same path. At the same time, different aural and structural effects have been achieved by filtering the original phrase.

One of the most challenging moments of the concert was a performance of *MATH* for violin, cello, and piano (2021), a piece with exceptional metrical and gestural complexity by Hanan Hadžajlić. The second block of the program included *Variazioni sul bianco* for cello and piano (2019) by Italian composer Daniela Terranova, written in the area of extended sonic environments and preoccupation with its material nature. The final piece of the evening was *Il colore dell'ombra* (2010), in which composer Clara Iannota rebalances the ensemble, and instruments are alternately detuned, muted, and relegated to extreme registers, invoking sounds that signify instruments' materiality, creating unique textures and vibrations.

The second concert was a retrospective of some crucial works from the second half of the 20th century to the present day, interpreted by soloists from the SONEMUS Ensemble. A remarkable Ukrainian-German pianist Vitalii Kyianytisa performed two masterpieces of the contemporary piano repertoire: Beat Furrer's *Drei Klavierstücke* (2004), based on resonance as the main sound event and resonating effect as a central compositional model, and Brian Ferneyhoughs' *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* (1981) for piano solo, a very famous "musical epigram" with dynamic, register, and articulation extremes.

On this occasion, flutist and composer Hanan Hadžajlić played *Flight* (1979) for solo flute by one of today's most prominent British composers, George Benjamin. This was the Bosnian premiere of this piece, which implies producing clear, dramatic structure and harmony within the flute monody, evoking the sight of birds over the peaks of the Swiss Alps. Eminent violinist Violeta Smailović-Huart gave an integral performance of *6 Capricci* by Salvatore Sciarrino, written as a comment on Paganini's *24 Capricci* with an entirely new musical vocabulary enriched by the authentic extended techniques.

The most impressive moment was the performance of *Aphorism f*or flute, clarinets, piano, violin and cello (2016) by Arash Yazdani, an Iranian compos-

er based in Estonia. Throughout the piece, different lines from texts of varying origin literature have been used. The musicians are asked to contemplate and meditate on the lines, both in figure and essence, and to apply them in different orders and combinations to the indicated musical lines. This vivid sonic experience, based on the combination of Iranian and European tradition of microtonal music and deep minuscule meditative weaving of various pulsations, was created by the interpretation of the SONEMUS Ensemble under Yazdani's direction.

The final evening was held under the title *Jugendstil* and brought together a young generation of contemporary music performers. After the intensive rehearsals guided by Kyianytsia, Smailović-Huart and Hadžajlić, the podium took Jelena Filipović (flute), Sara Barbara Bilela (violin), Zoja Vuković (tenor saxophone), Mirza Gološ (piano), whom joined Armin Smriko (clarinet), Belma Alić (violoncello) and Hanan Hadžajlić (flute), the teachers at the Academy of Music and members of the SONEMUS Ensemble.

Photo: Vanja Čerimagić

The repertoire mainly consisted of contemporary music classics but also included two pieces by young Bosnian composers. Cellist Belma Alić performed *Perpetual Possibility* for cello and voice by Azur Kasapović. The initial idea of this work is the perception of time as the incalculable simultaneous presence and interweaving of the past, present, and future, which reveals the existence of infinite possibility.

With saxophonist Zoja Vuković, Alić presented *(DIS)ENTANGLEMENT* for saxophone and cello, composed by the principle of the action and reaction in the correlation of the particular sounds in both – their synchronization and the phase of completely opposite characteristics. The author of this piece is Mirza Gološ, a composer and young pianist who performed Beat Furrer's *Voicelessness. The Snow Has No Voice* (1986) on the *Junedstil* concert. Named by the final line of Sylvia Plath's poem *The Munich Mannequin*, Furrer's composition consists of a unique form of notation with a complex polyrhythmic counterpoint.

Young flutist Jelena Filipović demonstrated the array of extended techniques and theatrical elements of *Voice* (1971) for the flute solo by the most renowned Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, while Armin Smriko performed Bruno Mantovani's virtuoso *Bug* for clarinet solo (1999), a work written as a musical metaphor for the disarray caused by an imaginary computer break-down reflected through rapid music. Duo Smriko and Hadžajlić interpreted Elliot Carter's *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux*, composed to express two opposite characters simultaneously, as an ironical dedication to great French composer Pierre Boulez for his sixtieth birthday.

The concert program was rounded up by the appearance of the *Jugendstil* Ensemble, which represented Jelena Filipović, Armin Smriko, Sara Barbara Bilela, and Mirza Gološ. They performed the piece named *For SONEMUS* by Dino Rešidbegović, in which the composer frames different sonic atmospheres and instrumental gests projected through his innovative compositional principle *Recuctional Music Complexity*. This year's SONEMUS edition was symbolically completed with this musical dedication.

SONEMUS Fest once again proved its significance in the Bosnian artistic context, which can be considered on many levels. As the only local festival of contemporary artistic music, every edition expands the perspectives and capacities of the local art scene and audiences. Unique high-level interpretations by internationally renowned musicians break the monotonous repertoire routine and have an emancipatory impact in the context of musical life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Another important aspect of the festival is its educational part, based on efforts of affirming young musicians in the domain of contemporary artistic music and creating a platform for their interpretative and intellectual growth. *(Dis)entanglement* edition presented a group of students who have demonstrated their

Photo: Vanja Čerimagić

potential to evolve into relevant representatives of the Bosnian contemporary music scene at the international level and (maybe) the future members of a sustainable resident professional ensemble.

The cosmopolitan essence and progressive character of SONEMUS are reflected in the constant tendency to rethink the present moment in all its complexity. This year's motif *(Dis)entanglement* deals with the essential issue of the purpose of art in times of crisis. Connecting the composers and performers from different backgrounds and varying musical contexts in reconsidering the disentangling world from a more human perspective, SONEMUS (Fest) made another step forward in the legitimation of the transcultural language as an alternative to the permanent global crisis when the (individual) skills and knowledge (maybe) are the (only) certainty.

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Contributors' Biographies

Luzilei Aliel holds a PhD in creative processes from the University of São Paulo. The main topic of his research is comprovisation (composition + improvisation) and the relationship between algorithmic composition, multimodal installations and music education. He is a member of NAP (Amazon Center for Musical Research) based at UFAC (Federal University of Acre), of NuSom (Research Center in Sonology) based at the Department of Music at ECA / USP, and of NEAC (Audio Engineering and Sound Encoding) based at the Engineering Department at POLI/USP.

Miloš Bralović (1991) is a researcher in the Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade, mainly working in the area of 20th-century Serbian music. He is a PhD candidate at the Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music in Belgrade, and his dissertation deals with the influence of European composers on selected Serbian composers of symphonic music in the second half of the 20th century. He is a member of the Serbian Composers' Association, Serbian Musicological Society, and one of the founders and members of the Association for Preservation, Research and Promotion of Music "Serbian Composers".

Marcos Célio Filho is a composer and academic from Paraiba. He is currently completing his Masters degree in composition at the Federal University of Paraíba, under the supervision of Marcello Messina, with a scholarship offered by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). As a member of NAP, Marcos has written about ubimus philosophical frameworks and live coding.

Carlos Mario Gómez Mejía is a Colombian double bass player residing in Brazil. In 2016 he entered the *Sinfónica Municipal de João Pessoa* (OSMJP) and has since worked as double bass instructor within the project *Ação Social Pela Música* (ASPM-JP). Since 2019 is reading for a PhD in musicology under the supervision of Marcello Messina, with a scholarship offered by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). Carlos is part of the Núcleo Amazônico de Pesquisa Musical (NAP) since 2020.

Lee Chie Tsang Isaiah has been pointed as a senior lecturer acting as the head of music department in faculty of Academy of Arts and Creative Technology (ACT), University Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia. Also, He is a member of the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC).

Fan Jia. Since joining the University Malaysia Sabah in 2019, Fanjia has been involved with studies related to Contemporary Music, Especially Contemporary

Chinese National Chamber Music. Before joining University, Fanjia worked at Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University as a senior lecturer.

Milena Jokanović is a research associate and lecturer within the Seminar for Museology and Heritology at the Art History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade and educator at the Museum of Yugoslavia. She holds a PhD in art history with the focus on museum and heritage studies and a master's degree in cultural policy and management. Her interests, therefore, span museology, culture of memory, use of historical models of collecting in modern and contemporary art practice, interpretation of heritage through new media and cultural management. She is the author of a book: *Cabinets of Wonders in the Art World*, numerous papers, several exhibitions and the manager of few cultural projects.

Damián Keller is an associate professor of music technology at the Federal University of Acre and the Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil. He is a member and founder of the Amazon Centre for Music Research (NAP) and the Ubiquitous Music Group. His research targets ubimus, ecologically grounded creative practice and multisensory music-making.

Marcello Messina is currently working as chief researcher in History and International Relations at Southern Federal University, in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. He also holds honorary lecturerships in Cultural Studies and Music at the the Federal Universities of Acre and Paraíba, in Brazil. As a member of NAP and g-ubimus, his research covers algorhitmic composition, live coding/ patching, political and philosophical approaches to creative practices and post-pandemic music making.

Sascia Pellegrini was trained in percussion, piano, and composition at the Conservatory G.Puccini (IT) and at IRCAM (FR).
Sascia's expertise is in intermedia, and interdisciplinary arts, with a strong background in music composition and dance choreography: he has conducted courses in Academies and Universities in Hong Kong, China, and Singapore.
His recent contributions: *Transplanted Roots Research Symposium* (UCSD), *Indeterminacy Conference* (UK), *Hauntology, Turmoil, Change Symposium* (Scotland), ITAC5 conference (US), Open Space Magazine (US), Culture Magazine (HK), Momm Dance Magazine (Korea).
Sascia has developed a close collaboration with the composer Ben Boretz and the singer Yungchen Llamo. He has performed in Italy, France, Germany, China, Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, where he collaborated with major dance companies.

Sascia is a Composition and Integrated Arts Teacher at The School of the Arts of Singapore and Editor for the Open Space Magazine (NY). He is currently completing his PhD research *A Phenomenology of Time through Sense Amplification* with the University of Dundee, Scotland.

Isabel Piniella is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent du CNRS in Paris, working with Frédérique Lange for the HISTAMAL international project on memory and affect in cultural practices. She obtained her PhD at the Institute of History of the University of Bern as a member of the Global Studies Program. Her doctoral research focused on the political commitment within the cultural production of Venezuelan actors in the 1960s. She has been awarded with a scholarship in 2018 from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst for pursuing research at the Iberoamerikanisches Institut in Berlin and in 2019 from the Dr. Joséphine de Karman Foundation. Piniella studied Humanities with a major in Contemporary History and Philosophy at the Pompeu Fabra University and holds a Master's degree in Contemporary Philosophy from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She also holds a music diploma from the Conservatori Municipal de Música de Barcelona and works as an independent new music curator, developing artistic research and performances with an interdisciplinary approach. Following her artistic experience, she co-founded the Ko-Operator! network in Lucerne, through which artistic residencies and interdisciplinary projects with guests and local artists take place.

Bojana Radovanović, musicologist and art theorist, research associate at the Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. She obtained her Ph.D. in 2022 at the University of Arts in Belgrade, studying the relations of voice to vocal technique and new technologies in contemporary art and popular music. She published two books, co-edited one collective monograph, and coauthored two documentaries. She is one of the founders of the Association for preservation, research, and promotion of music "Serbian Composers" that works on the largest internet audio-visual archive of Serbian art and film music, and a co-founder and the editor-in-chief of the scientific journal I*NSAM Journal of Contemporary Music, Art and Technology*.

Ivan Eiji Simurra is a composer and researcher who performs electronic manipulations in Pop Music (DJ). He holds a PhD from the State University of Campinas with emphasis on Creative Processes, under the guidance of Jônatas Manzolli, with funding from FAPESP and CAPES-FAPESP. He is currently adjunct professor at the Center for Education, Letters and Arts of the Federal University of Acre.

Guidelines for Authors

Guidelines for authors

Authors must submit original, unpublished articles.

All the manuscripts should be accompanied by author's name, affiliation, e-mail address, and a short biography (up to 150 words per author). Articles can be submitted in English (preferably) and Bosnian.

Manuscripts should be written in .doc or .docx format, in Times New Roman font, font size 12 with 1.5 line-spacing.

Original scholarly paper intended for sections The Main Theme and Beyond the Main Theme should include a short abstract (100-200 words), 5-10 keywords, as well as the summary (500 words). For articles in Bosnian, summary must be written in English. Do not include citations in the abstract. Keywords must be chosen appropriately in order to be relevant to the subject and content of the paper.

Regarding the citations, authors should use the author-date system with the separate bibliography, following the guidelines given in Chicago Manual of Style (The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017; http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Please note that the list of references (bibliography) given at the end of the article must only include works that are cited in text.

Book, conference, and festival reviews should bring to attention relevant and valuable contributions or events that are in interest scope of our Journal. Reviews must contain a dose of critical appraisal instead of being written merely as summary. The title of the book review should include necessary information regarding the volume, as in following example:

> - William Myers, *Bio Art – Altered Realities*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2015, 256 pp., ISBN 9780500239322
> - *Margins, Futures and Tasks of Aesthetics*, Conference of the IAA, Helsinki, Finland, July 5–7, 2018.
> - Sonemus Fest, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 16–21, 2018.

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Word count:

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> - Book, conference, and festival reviews – 1000-1500 words
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