Impromptu Curations

A research into the effect of multi-purpose venues on the aesthetic experience of experimental music

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ABSTRACT

The basis of this research work begins with observing the spaces used for the presentation of experimental music. We find that there is variety in the venues and that it often includes more informal club environments. With this choice musicians must decide how to adapt to the conditions and adjust them to what is presented. Their experience and intuition help them assess, both before and during the presentation, how they can intervene so that the outcome fulfills their intentions. But how close are their expectations to the public's experience?

A concert was organized for the purpose of the research in WORM Institute for Avantgardistic Recreation (Rotterdam, The Netherlands), an alternative, multi-purpose venue. Through the analysis of semi-structured interviews of audience and musicians we wanted to observe trends in the interpretations of the works. At the same time, the combination of the empirical data with theoretical approaches helped us understand the different factors involved in perception and signification processes; the performance, the listener (knowledge, training and lived experience) and the context – venue.

This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of multi-genre venues. It has revealed that these types of venues amplify certain qualities of experimental music, while obscuring others. Furthermore, we can confidently say that such curations encourage audiences to approach specific kinds of experimental music in a positive way.

KEYWORDS: audience research, experimental music, multi-purpose venues, live performance, listening

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Chapter I – Introduction

1.1 The Research Problem

Music today is presented in a lot more different types of venues than just the concert hall. So, what happens when experimental music is programmed at a club? This thesis is an examination of the consumption and dissemination of music that exists today among a varied musical landscape. It focuses specifically on experimental music because it is a genre where often the relationship between sound and its origin is obscure and an emphasis on the experience of sound is encouraged. Also, it has versatile stagings, in a variety of venues. As the quality of the technology, the set-up and the identity of venues fluctuate, it is of high importance to consider single location case-studies in order to see how performers adapt to its specific circumstances and to extensively map the experience of the audience.

With the ongoing struggles for subsidies, the way venues disseminate art is undoubtedly an interesting aspect in the topic of music consumption. According to the 2011 report for the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington D.C: "Setting is a critical backdrop to arts participation; it forms a rich topic for further research, mainly because so much rides on this variable in terms of future attendance patterns" (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011, p. 31).

To place the evolution of the venue in a historical perspective, the emergence of unconventional spaces in the middle of the 20th century was concurrent with the emergence of experimental performing arts in the USA at the same time. In 1952, an untitled event at the dining hall of Black Mountain College would come to be known as the first "happening". The event consisted of a series of unrelated performances of solo dance, film, slides, paintings, records, poetry reading and piano (Fetterman, 1996).

In the 1960s and 1970s, happenings were staged in lofts, stores, galleries and even museums. Moreover, at that time buildings would be converted into spaces for the accommodation of interdisciplinary performances. Typically, these spaces hosted different genres of experimental art and were without the raised stage of theaters and concert halls. At the same time, there were performances in bars, clubs and cafes which was traditionally the domain of popular and jazz music (Robinson, 2013). Alternative spaces provided a place for music that is new, risky or unknown. Artists could take a

chance on performing these works in a place with lower stakes and fewer programming gatekeepers than a concert hall.

The venue is another medium through which music is communicated and in this regard, one that audiences can seek out in order to participate in the arts. In the same way that downloads, hits and views on digital media hint at trends in music consumption, the venue as a medium communicates information about culture via the configuration of the physical space and the relationships cultivated within its walls. As this relates to audiences, the venue shapes the content of a performance and their perception of it, making live attendance different from the experience of a recording (Logan 2010). Therefore, the venue can be our point of entry into understanding the larger implications of the experimental music performance, in terms of meaning, preferred way of enjoying and the most appropriate way to do so.

Furthermore, the venue reflects changes in the consumption trends of experimental music. In the current art environment, according to Novak-Leonard and Brown (2011), art forms are becoming diverse, causing boundaries to shift and crossovers to occur. New media and the internet have a share in that shift as technologies like the mp3 player with its shuffle option, the ease in downloading digital audio files and control over content are thought to contribute to a breakdown in genre boundaries (Sunil Iyengar in Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011, Robinson 2013). The same study reported that some young adults "completely refuse to categorize their tastes in music, and insist that they are equally pleased with Ella Fitzgerald as with Radiohead" (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011, p. 29). This "playlist" culture has undoubtedly affected the rise of multi-genre programming in certain venues, which can be hosting a dance club event on one night and an electroacoustic performance on another, but also different genres on the same bill based on a consistency of mood. So the question is: *what effect do the parameters of a multi-genre venue and programming have on the way music is perceived and appreciated?*

The field of experimental music has already tried to investigate its reception. There is a plethora of studies on electroacoustic music, as inexperienced listeners have difficulties approaching music that demands intensive listening as a self-conscious and creative process and not merely as a receptive mode. Some composers have created analytic tools that give a manual for electroacoustic works (Kim, 2010, Smalley, 1997)

and there have also been empirical studies on the impact that information and education can have on the comprehensibility and appreciation of the genre by inexperienced listeners (Weale, 2006, Wolf, 2013).

However, the particular research argues that there is a need to go beyond the experimental conditions and individual listening. Additional research should be done on the listening experience during live performances at alternative venues where experimental music is possibly seen in a new light. According to Commander (2013, p. 64-65), venues can foster a deviation from musical habitus. “If an individual in the audience of the Bitch Magnet show knows that on another night there will be a wholly different type of music in the same space, they may be more inclined to step outside their predictable genre preferences if they are already familiar with the mode of participation, in this case attending a performance at LPR”.

1.2 Research Aims

The purpose of this study is to understand how the context of an experimental music performance shapes the aesthetic experience of the audience. More specifically, through semi-structured interviews of a purposive sample the study explores:

- The aesthetic experience through the personal narrative of the audience. The focus is on understanding the dynamic between personal dispositions, field specific experiences and the live experience. The aim is to see how each of the informants (respondents) construct their experience (listening in space) as to be fulfilling.
- The importance of the context to the aesthetic experience. Starting from the listeners' accounts, the focus is on the extent to which the context helps or deters from the appreciation of a performance, how it determines the artist-audience communication and whether it reinforces specific listening strategies. The aim is to build a contextual model of the listening experience.
- Lastly, the implications of programming experimental music in alternative venues for the genres presented. The study explores through interviews with the performers how and whether repertoire performed in alternative venues is different from the music programmed in concert halls (will surface in interviews for comparative goal). The focus is on the artwork and how it is transformed in

the process of production and/or performance, when an idea meets all sorts of physical constrains, standards and conventions. Alternative venues push experimental music in a new direction that could aid the survival of the art form in the future.

Data was gathered from one case study that was specifically designed for the purposes of the research. The case study is a live music event that took place on January 2017 at the foyer of WORM Institute for Avant-garde Recreation in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. It consisted of three experimental music performances with different levels of audiovisual elements. Also, three totally different electroacoustic and early avant-garde pieces were presented as an introduction before the three live acts. During the playback, the visitor-listener could read pop-up written comments on the waveform of each piece.

My interest in this topic was provoked by Emmerson's *Sound House* (2001), an idea for a multi-space for the performance of the sonic arts. The *Sound House* is a fantasy of "a convivial environment with activity and exchange" that facilitates both "sampling" & "extensive" listening (p.104-105). So, WORM's *Sound House* was designed in terms of programme and layout on the same principles of having a plethora of stimuli, ongoing performances, optional sitting, bar/club ambience, and social interaction.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The focus of the study on a small, alternative and non-traditional venue that caters for specific subcultures provides a unique set of conclusions not available in the results of large-scale national surveys. That is definitely important for curators and venues; in this case especially for WORM and Rotterdam's cultural spaces. It could be argued that a concert hall might still be ideal in a way, or at least a standard to which many performances are geared. However, in this study it is assessed what happens when music is taken to these multi-purpose venues. What are the benefits and drawbacks in terms of technical possibilities, connecting to the audience, audience compositions and so on? Searching for answers to these questions could manifest that these multi-purpose venues may connect easier with the conceptual and social aspects of the genre and can function as a serious alternative. The study is also important for the experimental artists.

By looking at behavior, artists can inform their future practices, view their work in context and make better choices for presenting it (Chaves & Rebelo, 2012).

1.4 Reading Map

Chapter I puts forward an introduction to the topic, presenting an outline of the project and a rationale for exploring the audience's interpretation of experimental electronic music works. In Chapter II, the type of work with which this thesis is concerned is introduced and defined, discoveries from previous empirical research projects are considered and several theories of interpretation from a spectrum of disciplines are discussed. The next chapters refer to the empirical study, designed to obtain impressions from the audience for a variety of experimental electronic music performances, in order to discern the effect of stylistic variations (audio/audiovisual) on interpretation. Chapter III lays out the chosen research methodology and data analysis procedures and Chapter IV presents the results and analyses of the study. Finally, Chapter V regards the research findings and discusses prospective outputs for future studies.

Chapter II - Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides a background and point of focus in explaining how the context of an experimental music performance shapes the aesthetic experience of the audience. The chapter unfolds in two sections. The first section offers an introduction to the aesthetics of experimental electronic music, considers the experience of watching a live performance; both in the case of fixed media compositions (loudspeakers on stage) and when there is a performer, and presents the findings of previous empirical research projects. The second section examines theoretical perspectives underpinning the issue of production and consumption of culture in music venues.

2.1 Experimental Electronic Music

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Often those who experience electronic music for the first time describe it as "edgier", "more sophisticated", or "more demanding" (Demers, 2010, p.15) than conventional popular music. This first part of the chapter explores the nature, aims and performance of experimental electronic music that render it unique and determine how it is perceived and appreciated by the audience.

Throughout this study, the term *electronic music* is used for any type of music that features the exclusive or primary use of electronic instruments or equipment. Electronic music comprises *electroacoustic music*, which features acoustic instruments with amplification, signal processing, as well as electronic instruments (using sampled or synthesized sounds). The qualifier *experimental* is used to refer to the practices that deviate from the musical conventions of their time.

A number of studies are presented below. They testify to how multifaceted electronic music is and how its practitioners experiment with sound as well as with presentation. Ultimately, the discourse about electronic music seems to place it along a series of subversive forces that throughout the 20th century have stretched the musical frame to the limit and reshaped expectations for what music is, how it functions and how audiences should listen to it. Also, reference is made to two empirical studies on the role that information and education play in the comprehensibility and appreciation of the electroacoustic genre by inexperienced listeners (Weale, 2006, Wolf, 2013).

Johanna Demers has fruitfully mapped out the terrain of experimental electronic music aesthetics. In *Listening through the Noise* she makes the bold claim that "electronic music is fundamentally different in character and in aspiration from any music that preceded it" (Demers, 2010, p.12). That is a difference of frame, which is defined by Demers as "a collection of expectations for how music should behave and what distinguishes it from non-musical sound" (Demers, 2010, p.149).

The pre-electronic musical frame consisted of some type of harmony, predictable forms, melodies, rhythms, instrumental timbres, orchestration, concert venues and concert culture. These characteristics worked together to distinguish music from non-musical sound (e.g. exclusion of noise). Of course, not all listeners bring the same experience or knowledge to what they hear, and listening experiences vary according to history, culture, and the music itself. Nonetheless, the understanding of music's ontology as organized sound of a special acoustic discourse, which is presented in a special occasion/place, has been culturally consistent (Demers, 2010).

Demers makes the case that frames are important. "We can be relatively certain that most people who have grown up in a particular culture can recognize its music *as* music even if they know nothing else about its production or meaning" (Demers, 2010, p.12). To make an analogy with the art of painting, even though viewers do not usually contemplate the picture frame, it holds an important role; to distinguish the painting from the wall on which it is mounted and thus give it the status of art.

Rather, electronic music contains a lot of anti-framing techniques which disrupt the cultural and aesthetic standards of music performances, irrespective of genre or style. "Electronic music has assaulted the musical frame on many fronts, by confusing the distinction between live and prerecorded sound, incorporating non-musical sound, and relying on nontraditional venues and spaces that thrust listeners into the performance space" (Demers, 2010, p. 172).

Ever since music making opened up to new sounds and the sounds of everyday life, its experience for the listener has become much more elusive. The recording, amplification and sound synthesis technologies enable composers to work with almost any possible sound. "[I]t can enlist acoustic instruments to produce the pitches, scales, and rhythms of traditional musical discourse. Yet [...] it can also incorporate sounds of the outside world [...]. [C]an also fashion new sounds that have never yet been heard.

Just consider [...] the strategy of many electroacoustic composers to engineer new sounds by manipulating grains, the acoustic equivalent of subatomic particles. This breadth of possible sounds makes electronic music both musical and nonmusical, representational and abstract, familiar and arcane" (Demers, 2010, p. 22). This new condition ordinarily makes up a different listening experience. How does one listen to unmusical and everyday sounds in the context of an artwork?

2.1.2 The perception of sound

Any discussion about listening is essentially debating the signifying properties of sound[1]. Do sounds possess meaning and, if so, is it possible to hear sounds without any associations coming to mind? Is it necessary to hear sounds in artworks differently from how one would if they were encountered elsewhere? How can one make sense of an abstract experience? "All electronic music is a meditation on the act of listening to sounds both old and new, therefore a meditation on the cognitive processes that accompany listening" (Demers, 2010, p. 22).

Listening to an electroacoustic piece over loudspeakers or headphones offers a unique experience in a world of perceptual possibilities. According to the composer Kim (2010) "one of the primary concerns of electroacoustic music listening is to recognize and observe the relation between the source-place decoupling of recorded sounds, its process and design, and the listener's process of engaging with dis-embodied and dis-placed sounds" (p. 43).

Interestingly though, the live electronic performance offers some acousmatic moments too, like when artists use instruments that are largely unfamiliar to the public, when their set-up obscures sound creation, or when they work with pre-recorded or preset structures. In these cases, even if the sounds produced are not that unintelligible, the link between the performer's actions and the sounds created is often not clear for the audience. Smalley (1997) refers to a rupture in the (unconscious) audiovisual training of physical sound-making that had established the sounding gesture as an intuitive mode of apprehension for the audience.

Moreover, the discussion about listening is very much related to the perceptual abilities (auditory/sound perception) of humans and the level of control that composers

1 The debates about the semiotic function of music can be traced back to the Baroque era, as well as the programmatic vs absolute dipole of the 18th and 19th century (Demers, 2010, p.13).

and listeners have over the listening process. Hill (2013) has thoroughly examined different interpretation theories from a variety of fields and how these match cognitive perception models in reference to electroacoustic audiovisual music. However, this study cannot hope to present such an extensive discussion and will focus on Pierre Schaeffer, the pioneer of the electronic music genre *musique concrète,* who theorized extensively on the listening experience. In his seminal *Traité des objets musicaux* of 1966, Schaeffer explained how humans perceive sound by categorizing their hearing and listening practices into four modes (*ouïr, écouter, comprendre, entendre*).

Michel Chion, in his guide to Schaeffer's *Traité,* sums up the four modes in the following scenario: "*I perceived (ouïr) what you said despite myself, although I did not listen (écouter) at the door, but I didn't comprehend (comprendre) what I heard (entendre)*" (Chion, 2009, p. 20). This example is used to explain how each mode works. This sentence can be broken down to:

"I perceived…" : *Ouïr*, is simply the act of hearing.

"…although I did not listen at the door…" : *Ecouter, "*is an information-gathering mode in which sounds are used as indices for objects and events in the world" (Kane, 2014, p. 27). The sound of the door opening and closing is a clear indication of location that is missing in this case.

"…I didn't comprehend…" : "*Comprendre,* means grasping a meaning, values, by treating the sound as a sign, referring to this meaning through a language, a code" (Chion, 2009, p.20). This mode places an identity on the sound and simultaneously denies any sonic quality of the sound itself.

"…what I heard" : "*Entendre*, according to its etymology, means showing an intention to listen, choosing from what we perceive (*ouïr*) what particularly interests us, in order to make a 'description' of it" (Chion, 2009, p.20). The person in the sentence has clearly heard the other say something, but needs to ask again because his subjective hearing might have led him to conclude something other than the true meaning.

Musique concrète was developed in the studios of the Parisian radio station Radiodiffusion Française in the 1950s. Its materials consisted of concrete sounds of the environment, which were recorded, processed, edited, mixed and 'orchestrated' in the studio, through the use of technology (Kane, 2014). Schaeffer's intention was to develop an organic musical syntax and grammar stemming from the identity of the concrete

material. In Schaeffer's own words:

> When in 1948 I suggested the term musique concrète I meant, with this adjective, to signal a u-turn in the practice of music. Instead of notating musical ideas in the symbols of traditional music theory, and entrusting their realization to known musical instruments, I wanted to gather concrete sound material, wherever it came from, and extract from it the sonorous musical values which it potentially contained (1966, as cited in Chion, 2009, p. 38).

His compositional process included a specific listening strategy, which he called *reduced listening* (*écoute réduite*). This perceptual intention consisted in bracketing out any cognitive associations (spatiotemporal source or meaning) linked to the sounds and instead focusing on their morphology. Also, the repetition of sound fragments enabled him to go beyond the identification of a source or meaning (Chion, 2009).

Schaeffer regarded the sound recording systems and the radio as acousmatic reductions. The term acousmatic is "referring to a sound that one hears without seeing the causes behind it" (1966, as cited in Kane, 2014, p. 24). The potential of the acousmatic situation lies in that even if the listener speculates about sources or meanings, there is no access to other sensory assessments to that contemplation. The resulting listening disorientation has value in itself, as it brings all modes into focus and the listener is led to reconsider the content of his perception exclusively via auditory means. "We discover that much of what we thought we were hearing was in reality only seen and explained by the context" (Schaeffer, 1966, as cited in Chion, 2009, p.11).

2.1.3 Previous Empirical Research Projects

The next part of the study discusses the empirical research projects on audiences that have impacted on the development of the current project. In particular, these are two experiments that investigate the accessibility and appreciation of electroacoustic music. Their results pose the question of how inexperienced or first time listeners approach electroacoustic music and the relation between "learning" the new language and appreciation.

Weale (2006) implemented the Intention/Reception project on three groups of listeners (based on having no, some or high experience) with the help of three works that consisted of different levels of abstract sounds. More specifically, he wanted to test two concepts proposed by Landy in regards to making sense and appreciating a work of electroacoustic music. Landy argued that the listener uses *Something to Hold on to*

Factors (SHF) in order to make sense of an electroacoustic work, and proposed that the *dramaturgy* (knowledge the composer wants to communicate, e.g. titles, composer's ideas) can affect its appreciation. The three works chosen were described as 1. location soundscape; 2. soundscape with sonic abstraction; and 3. abstract referential (with real world quality). Participants performed three listenings for each work while recording their response in the *Real-time Questionnaire*[2]; the title was introduced before the second listening and dramaturgical information were provided before the third. Also, after the first listening, the *Directed Questionnaire*[3] was completed (Weale, 2006).

The research showed that listeners combined several SHF and at the same time reinforced their perception with (mis)interpretations that involved personal memories and experiences[4]. The principal SHF used by inexperienced listeners were *real-world relevance*, *image-based* and *narrative* listening. Furthermore, their appreciation of the work was also based on the real-world referential content, and thus as the presence and use of abstract/transformed sound increased, access and appreciation decreased. However, even in the most abstract contexts, all listeners were able to establish an imaginative, real-world interpretation showing the ability to engage in active listening. In these cases, background information on how the composer manipulated the sounds (dramaturgy) gave the abstract/transformed sounds a real-world relevance and helped the listeners make sense of the compositional choice. Another major finding was that 73% of the (inexperienced) listeners considered repeated listening assisting the listening experience (Weale, 2006).

Overall, most inexperienced listeners used the title and dramaturgy as access tools and thought they were significant in providing a path to such works[5]. Many aspects of the composers' communicative intentions were perceived by a large group of listeners from all user groups; something that indicated a level of shared listening experience across the different levels of knowledge. Lastly, this study found that electroacoustic pieces can be interpreted by a variety of audiences and that an important

2 Real-time Questionnaire (RTQ1,2,3) (Weale, 2006).

3 The questions in the DQ encouraged the listener to elaborate on their RTQ notes (Weale, 2006).

4 The *Something to Hold on to Factors* were grouped into the following categories: real-world sounds (source/cause, voice, location), parameters of sounds, structure (narrative, layers, juxtaposition or real-world or acoustic), transformation (static, dynamic), homogeneity of sounds (real-world, parameters) and extrinsic information (title, dramaturgy) (Weale, 2006, p.193).

5 The title helped them identify sounds relative to it and also gave them the meaning of the work. It was more instrumental for the *abstract referential* work. On the other hand, dramaturgy made them listen and recognise sounds that were important for the communicative intentions of the composer. It was more instrumental for the *location soundscape* work (Weale, 2006).

percentage of audiences want to listen to more of it (66% of inexperienced participants; Weale, 2006).

Weale's research demonstrated the link between information and appreciation of electroacoustic music. Wolf (2013) was rather concerned with knowledge. He started from the hypothesis that electroacoustic music for the inexperienced listener is a new and challenging situation and therefore one could use a guide to the new world. The aim of the EARS 2 (P) curriculum he created was not to force listeners to like the genre but to understand it. These were the aims behind Wolf's curriculum, which was tested in a large-scale study. Data were collected using questionnaires, a listening response test and a summary of the teaching (letter written by participants). The musicological framework consisted of the classification of sounds as *real world* and *generated*, the listening experience (training in reduced and referential listening) and the modes of discourse, analysis and representation (aural analysis and graphical representation) (Wolf, 2013, p. 126-127). The learning outcomes of the curriculum were split into three areas: factual, conceptual and procedural knowledge (Wolf, 2013, p.128).

Results showed the change of the participants' appreciation of electroacoustic music during the study and more specifically, that the appreciation of electroacoustic music can be enhanced through the acquirement of conceptual knowledge (the ability to apply different listening strategies to different listening situations). Especially important was the enhancing of listening skills following the listening training (in the beta study, it was found that the participants did not have any listening strategy when listening to electroacoustic music), the development of aural analysis skills, as well as the broadening of the participants' vocabulary that enabled them to describe more adequately their listening experience and develop their own (cognitive) prototype of electroacoustic music (Wolf, 2013).

Those two studies highlighted three important factors that were further explored in the current research project; work type, audience experience and contextual information (Weale, 2006). In developing the methodology, certain aspects were modified so that it was possible to observe the extent to which the findings stood in a concert setting. The programme consisted of fixed media and live performances of diverse music styles (improvisation, live electronics), all but one with visuals (silent film, added video and audiovisual) so that consideration to the interaction of sound and

image was given and the effect of stylistic differences upon interpretation was determined. Also, the audience was provided with several options for accessing dramaturgic information (online, programme notes, OLF projection). In regards to collecting qualitative data, a version of the Real-time Questionnaire was provided as an option to fill while listening and the Directed Questionnaire was replaced with semi-structured interviews that took place afterwards.

2.2 The Context

2.2.1 The Music Performance

The current section goes on with the clarification of the final factors investigated in the study; performance and venue. Having described the aesthetic experience from the point of view of the (aesthetic properties of the) experimental work, the focus shifts to the exploration of the 'event' of listening to music in terms of the mediations on which it relies.

According to Hennion, music should be seen "not as a static product, on a score, on disc or in a concert programme, but as an unpredictable event, a real-time performance, an actual phenomenon generated by instruments, machines, hands and actions" (2001, p.2). In particular, some of the mediations of music are the instruments, media (venue, record), involvement of the body (performer, listener), feelings and sensations in the experience and discourse (Looseley, 2006). Furthermore, regarding the listener, Hennion argues that taste, pleasure, and meaning are neither purely subjective, nor reflexive to the aesthetic qualities of a piece, nor determined (biologically, socially), but activities (Hennion 2004). "Just as much as the music itself, taste is a production, a performance; it is always in the making and in situation; always reflexive and under test conditions. It is also an ongoing co-production, of both a loved musical object and a body which is training itself to love it" (Looseley, 2006, p. 345). People employ different options and strategies for accessing music and listening. Thus, it is important that research illuminates one's personal map and explains "what it means to like something nowadays, how it is experienced, what medium is used and with whom it takes place" (Hennion, 2001, p. 5). Furthermore, it is important to rely on real-world cases, ideally in the very space where something happened. These were key takeaway messages for the present study.

Issues of mediation and materiality come about also when exploring the relationship between technological developments and music aesthetics and practices. Marshall McLuhan has highlighted the effects of media on people's perception of the world in his famous aphorism “the Medium is the Message” (McLuhan & Lapham, 1994). According to Logan (2010), the phrase can be interpreted in different ways. One is the idea that the medium's message is “the change of scale, or pace, or pattern that it introduces into human affairs” (McLuhan & Lapham, 1994, p.8). So the medium, irrespective of its content, has its own inherent effects on the users' perception with inflicting a new environment to them. For Logan there is also a second interpretation; that the medium shapes its content and the users' perception of it (Logan, 2010). Logan's interpretation can be employed to illuminate the case of music. Commonly, media of music are considered the objects that record or play a recording or performance, like the phonograph, the mp3 or the internet. Nevertheless, a venue is also a medium that communicates music, as well as a mode of participation in the arts. As each medium shapes the music performance and the audience's perception of it differently, a live performance at a music space offers a different experience of the music than the experience of listening to it online, on a CD or on LP. The difference lies in the physical space and the relationships cultivated within it.

Small (1998, 1999) has been among the strongest advocates of the idea that performance is neither subordinate to the music work nor neutral, even if it is often discussed as presentation. In fact, a lot of music cultures do not use compositions or notation; but without performance there is no music. He coined the term *musicking* to highlight that music is primarily a social activity and thus the meaning of the act lies in the relationships that are established. According to his own definition:

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing) or by dancing (Small, 1998, p. 9).

To get a grasp of *musicking*, we should not just pin our hopes in understanding the music work but rather ask ourselves the broader question of “What does it mean when this performance takes place at this location, at this time, with these people taking part, both as performers and as listeners?” (Small, 1999, p. 19).

For the most part, the relationships of a music performance fall into three groups; those generated by the physical setting in which the performance takes place,

the relationships between participants (performers, listeners and others involved) and the relationships between sounds (Small, 1999). These groups interact in ways that are often hard to explain verbally, but that are nonetheless experienced in a performance. In the case of venues, they signify the concepts of human relationships they were built around but also impose them in the performances taking place in them. In fact, the location, size and configuration of a venue give out how socially important the event is, how the participants are expected to behave and what their relationships can be. In essence, the placement of the audience to face the stage in a large venue encourages them to be quiet and focused. Also, the physical separation from the stage and the distance from the world of the performers renders the audience as receivers who are invited to individually contemplate the music, but cannot affect it in any way. Ultimately, for Small (1998, 1999) a society's understanding of *ideal* relationships is evident in the way people pattern their musicking. This patterning comes down to the style of sound relationships but also to how a performance is structured in a physical and social setting.

As an audience member, the individual is part of a bigger group whose experience will inevitably be affected by the rest, as well as by the environment. Sung-Bong Park (1993) contends that the aesthetic experience is actually a manner of participating with and being involved in the art that includes a specific mind-set that he calls aesthetic consciousness. The awakening of the aesthetic consciousness might come from external stimulation, like when one is captivated by a sound, sight, etc. but also from the intrinsic motivation to absorb the potential quality of the experience. “In a way, when we enter the concert hall, art gallery, theatre, pick up the book or put a record on the gramophone, we already cross the threshold to the aesthetic situation whereby the aesthetic potential of every individual object is supposed to be actualized” (Park, 1993, p. 28).

2.2.2 Multi-genre[6] and Alternative Venues as Media

The following section introduces multi-genre or alternative venues and the issues at stake in terms of acoustics, performance, audience behavior and marketing strategies. The few studies on the topic have been concerned with the accommodation of classical

6 The term 'multi-genre' is not used to highlight only the different styles of music a venue can host, but also the multi-purpose character of a venue, e.g. bar, gallery, library, live stage etc.

music in alternative-to-the-concert-hall spaces (Commander, 2013, Robinson, 2013). Discussing the reported decrease in the American public's engagement with the arts, Commander (2013) suggested it could be due to non-traditional venue spaces and live streaming opportunities left unexamined from the report. His objective was that the public's growing use of media, with the media's "easier and more vibrant" access to music, made them seek out music spaces that would present them with the same variety of options. He called these spaces multi-genre venues. By programming classical music among a variety of other genres, alternative venues broke the norms of classical music and deconstructed notions of the genre as *high* art, he argued. So in turn multi-genre venues affected the audience's perception of classical music and thus where and how they sought it out. Ultimately, this could have a positive impact on the accessibility of classical music (Commander, 2013). This premise was a significant inspiration for the current project, which thus sought to investigate the impacts of this same type of venue in the case of experimental electronic music.

The focus now shifts to the corruption of the genre's main principles at alternative venues. Robinson (2013) has mapped the unique factors of presenting classical music in bars and clubs and argued that the culture of alternative venues offers challenges as well as opportunities to the artists. Overall, in alternative venues, the concert culture tends to be casual and eating, drinking and socializing are usually encouraged. However, this is not without its effects on noise levels and attention. A major issue is that because many large pop venues have been created for amplified music (for low reverberation and to combat background noise) they do not work well with acoustic instruments that are common in classical music. In that case, musicians have to rely on amplification and with it, to take into account the quality of the system as well as the experience of sound engineers in working with their instrument.

When playing in an alternative space, musicians are challenged to re-think the effectiveness of their performance and make adjustments. There is a tendency to go more casual in the presentation style, dressing and stage presence, without any of the concert hall etiquettes, like bowing or making an entrance and exit (Robinson, 2013). In terms of repertoire in a bar or club, there are certain tactics that work better than others. As audiences are exposed to a lot of sensory input and have the freedom to come and go, musicians are more likely to amplify their instruments and perform in a way that

captures attention, rather than take for granted an attentive audience. This means that loud, fast and intriguing pieces work best, especially if placed first in a programme. Short pieces work equally well, because they do not require a long attention span from the audience. Also, some musicians try to figure out the preferences of their audience on the spot and adjust their performance accordingly; something which is easier for solos or smaller ensembles.

At the same time, also the venue's configuration impacts the “experience” (Commander, 2013, p.57), “atmosphere and effectiveness” (Robinson, 2013, p. 99) of a concert. The configuration is reflected in the way people in the audience are positioned in relation to each another and the performers. In smaller venues, everybody is usually standing in close proximity, and the audience feels much more comfortable expressing themselves and interacting with each other and the artists. This situation adds to the energy and excitement of the live performance and helps artists become more aware of the effects of their performance.

There are also some other interesting claims. Firstly, that alternative venue performances broaden the audience for classical music, as the audience in these venues is younger and less affluent than the concert hall's (Robinson, 2013). Also, that alternative venues offer opportunities for audience development, as musicians observe that they often get the venue's audiences at their shows, or share fans with other bands that play in the same programme.[7] Furthermore, that performances at alternative venues are more easily marketable to non-classical music fans, because they can be promoted as “a night in town with a show at a bar” (Robinson, 2013, p. 97). Characteristically, the owner of LPR, one of the most famous multi-genre clubs in New York, has stated that the small numbers of young listeners of classical music are a problem of ineffective packaging, rather than content (Commander, 2013, p. 57). In that sense, alternative venues treat the audience's needs with respect and try to create an intimate and casual environment that can attract them into coming back irrespective of the production.

Lastly, there is a lot of music and programming experimentation at alternative venues. Due to the lower stakes and fewer programming gatekeepers, those places host new, risky or unknown music that would be difficult to program at a concert hall. Also,

7 Of course, it is common for the devoted audience to follow the artists in different locations, both conventional and unconventional. This was found to be especially true for fans of contemporary classical music (Robinson, 2013).

popular and classical pieces with a similar mood and instrumentation can be combined together in programmes. At the same time, it is not rare to find electroacoustic and multi-media works in popular venues as they are usually equipped with elaborate sound, light and video systems. Furthermore, artists from different genres that circulate in the same venue often take an interest in each other's work and form collaborations, while some develop a mixed-genre repertoire from working in alternative venues. According to Robinson (2013), alternative spaces “have helped create a subset of classical music that is less formal and more open to new, genre-bending music” (p. 122).

In addition to the above, the audience survey by Roose (2003) conducted in five institutions staging both symphonic and chamber music in Flanders, Belgium, is relevant, as one can draw useful information about the promotion on the one side and the age concentration of the attendants on the other. Specifically, Roose distinguished three groups based on the frequency of attendance (passers-by, interested participants, inner circle), arguing that promotion must be linked to the factor of field-specific experiences. What is more interesting, however, is that he finds the opposite view of what we have already said above; he observes that in the concert hall the audience of experimental classical music is mostly older. Looking at all of the above, it follows that space defines the target groups that attend and having a preference for the most experimental scene is not a privilege of either the younger or the older. On the contrary, there is a clear preference for where each age group chooses to listen to this music.

In Chapter IV, it will be appreciated how relevant WORM Institute for Avant-garde Recreation is as a case study, as it embodies several of the aforementioned characteristics of a multi-genre or alternative venue; in terms of the audience it attracts, the art it hosts and its culture and configuration.

2.3 Expectations

The current project has been situated in the framework of the reported research and theories and was affected by them for the development of its key questions (issues) and methodology. Looking at the results of previous research, it is likely that the collected data will reveal four major outcomes. First, experimental electronic music will be interpreted and found engaging by audiences of various levels of experience. Second, contextual information that provides a framework for the audiences' interpretations will

contribute to increased engagement. Third, audiovisual and performative aspects will also contribute to increased engagement. Fourth, a relaxed listening environment will encourage audiences to approach experimental electronic music works in a positive way.

Chapter III – Method

3.1 Introducing the Study

To answer the research question of how the context of an experimental music performance shapes the aesthetic experience of the audience, a study was undertaken among the audience of the live music event *WORM Pirate Bay Sound House* which took place on January 13, 2017 at the foyer of WORM Institute for Avant-garde Recreation in Rotterdam.

This particular event was designed for the purposes of the research. The line-up consisted of three experimental music performances (two solos and one ensemble, about 40 minutes each) with different levels of audiovisual elements. As a small introduction before each live act, three electroacoustic and early avant-garde pieces were presented. At the same time, the waveform of the pieces and pop-up written comments were projected on a side wall. It was also suggested that the members of the audience produced reflective accounts on the backside of the programme notes, recording anything related to their experience in the live event. Throughout the evening, there was a parallel exhibition of a curated selection of media from WORM's archive. The audiovisual items had been selected by two of the performers, Fani and Yannis, on the basis of their preferences and inspirations.

3.2 Data Collection and Sources

At the beginning of the evening, programme notes and pens were handed out to the audience. The front side of the handout contained the titles of the performances and names of artists and the backside had the following call: *Please list any thoughts, images and/or ideas that come to mind as you listen to the performances*. The audience were invited to note down an account of their experience and hand it in at the end. They were also informed that this was part of a research project and that it was possible to sign up for an additional interview by writing their email address on the handout.

By the end of the evening, twenty people had handed in their programme notes. The collected data were of great variety: there were two programme notes with email addresses but no accounts, six with accounts but no addresses and twelve notes with both responses and addresses. Also, a number of programme notes that were lying

around the audience space were collected; these were either blank or with doodles. As the question asked was deliberately left open, the responses took various forms: diary-like, summative reflective, keywords, cartoon-like drawings and conceptual (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010), varying in length from a few keywords to a few A4s.

Afterwards, a list of all the contact information from the audience was compiled. Fourteen people were contacted by email but only few responded. It was decided to supplement the selection of interviewees with snowball sampling (Boeije, 2010, p. 51-52): It was pointed out by the Free Improvisation Quintet that a large number of the attendees were students at the Sonology Institute in the Hague, which had come to see their friends perform. With that in mind and because it was expected they would comprise a sample of listeners with a sufficient level of engagement, one of the performers volunteered to help make contact with the students that were present on that evening for a potential interview. Additionally, it was opted to interview people from the audience that had taken the opportunity to write down their thoughts, in order to see how that had worked for them.

A total of seven people from the audience were invited for interviews; four of them studied at the Sonology, one was invited by Fani (*Sound Topographies #6*), two of them had written their impressions (both were not students at the Sonology) and the gender ratio was five men and two women. Results were agreed to be kept securely and to be published only in an anonymized format. The total number of attendees was over fifty. Of these, twenty/thirty people were all around the stage and they were really focused on the performances. In addition, interviews with the performers of the three acts took place. It made sense to interview the ensemble as a group and not as individual artists, as they had been practicing as a group. The artists did not mind to be referred to by name in the report. All participants were asked to sign a research agreement explaining their rights and the obligations of the researcher. In all cases, consent for the interviews to be audiotaped was obtained.

Both topic guides were adaptations of the original Intention/Reception questions (Weale, 2006). Alterations were made in order to ensure that the methodology was appropriate for the study. The topic guide used for the interviews with the performers focused on describing their intentions within their work and additionally how that had worked, or not, in their performance at WORM. That information became a point of

reference for the analysis of participant observations. On the other hand, the topic guide used for the interviews with the audience was based on a more elaborate topic list. Firstly, there were questions to elicit the ways by which listeners made sense of the works in terms of their content and contextual data. These were derived by the Directed Questionnaire of the Intention/Reception project (Hill, 2013, p.117):

1. The perceived material properties of the work
2. The perceived meaning of the work and the audience's emotional responses
3. The audience's desire to see more/keep listening to similar compositions
4. Audience's desire for contextual information and evaluation of the information provided

Secondly, there were questions designed to determine the extent to which both the listeners' background as well as the specifics of the occasion assisted them in terms of access, informed their listening strategy and enhanced appreciation:

5. The audience's taste in music and familiarity with the genres presented
6. The audience's motivation for attendance and expectations of the performance
7. The evaluation of the programming and curatorial choices, as well as of the overall event

The interviews were guided by the topic lists, but the respondents were given enough room to bring forward their own point of view. The two participants who had written their impressions were allowed to consult their real time notes. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 40 to 80 minutes. The data were supplemented with the written accounts at the back of the programme notes, which were meant to encourage active listening, as well as with research memos.

The first interview was conducted 2.5 weeks after the event. The interviewing period lasted for three weeks in total. Nine out of ten interviews were conducted face-to-face at three different locations; the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, at WORM and at the house of an interviewee. However, the interview with one of the performers, Jaap Blonk, took place via a Skype call, as he lived in a different city. Unfortunately, due to a technical problem, the sound of the 28 minute conversation was not recorded. As Jaap was too busy at the time to schedule another interview, he agreed to provide answers to a questionnaire. Unfortunately, he replied by answering only half of it, as he found the questions not representative of his works. The choice to keep the questions open and not

adjust them to Jaap's replies during our interview was a conscious one, as they were meant to be kept true to what was originally asked. However, the rest of the questions were reformulated on the basis of the Skype interview and he did not have trouble replying to that.

3.3 Data Analysis

The audiotaped discussions were transcribed verbatim following the method of Powers (2005). Concerning the transcription rules that were followed, there was a general guideline for minimum non-verbal fillers in the transcript to ensure that there was flow and ease in the reading process. Nonetheless, attention was paid to point out cases of hesitation. For that reason, a large part of the fillers that were used at the beginning of responses, or when the respondent was thinking, were cut out. However, there were interviewees who had fragmented responses and that needed to be obvious in the transcript. These people were usually having a lot of false starts, unfinished sentences and repetitions. Syntax allowed access to their thought process and so made sure to include these in the transcript.

Also, overlapping speech was reported differently than interruption in the transcript to distinguish one from the other (Powers, 2005). In the first case, the overlapping texts were put in brackets and it was made sure that the portions started together. In the second case, two methods were used: If the interruption was nothing more than non-verbal/verbal ascent that did not break off the ongoing speech it was enclosed in parentheses with the initials of the speaker and placed within the main speaker's words (any comma came after the interruption). These responses mainly supported the main speaker and it was something that was used extensively for the group interview. However, if the interruption broke off the main speaker's words, this was shown by having the two responses on separate lines, without any brackets. Sometimes that was preceded by a moment of hesitation/pause in the first speaker shown by the use of the em dash (without period).

In general, the responses of the interviewer (myself) that appear in the transcripts, especially those overlapping, were picked out on the basis of whether they contributed to the dialogue. It was decided to keep the majority of the interviewees' assents though. Especially in the transcription of the Free Improvisation Quintet's

interview, attention was given to the inter group communication so all assent or dissent instances, both nonverbal and verbal (i.e. yeah, yes, no) were captured.

The written accounts on the back side of the programme notes were not transcribed, but used as such. Jaap Blonk's questionnaires were treated as the interview transcripts.

Throughout the interview process and the analysis, memos were kept with observations on the interviewee and email communication, research choices and main themes, or anything unusual that came up while working with the data.

Chapter IV – Results

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the results collected; firstly from the interviews with the artists, followed by the ones with the audience. The first two sections of *artist intention interviews* and *participants* are the backdrop for the *audience responses*, which consists of an exposition of interpretations to the three works for each theme and summaries of the general trends on the issues of curation/programming and venue. Responses from each participant, transcribed verbatim from the recorded interviews can be found within the transcripts section. The report concludes in Chapter V with a summary of the main findings in the interpretations between the acts, engaging with theory whenever appropriate.

4.1 Artist Intention Interviews

The artists of the three performances were interviewed about their compositional and performing intentions with their works, expectations from the audience and were asked to reflect on the particular realization in WORM. The interviews were intended to elicit information on the following topics of investigation: content of music, artistic intention, audience, programming, space, self-evaluation and programme notes. That information was used as a reference point in the analysis of audience interpretations.

4.1.1 The Free Improvisation Quintet – Sonic Experiments on the Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929) – 40'

The Free Improvisation Quintet comprised five people who were studying at the Institute of Sonology in the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. There was Laura Agnusdei (LA), who was playing the saxophone, Yannis Patoukas (Y) and Liew Niyomkarn (LI) who were playing electric guitars, Aidan Gross (AI) who was playing cello and Dalton Danks (D) who was playing drums. They had come together just a few months ago, craving a platform that would allow them to explore (un)familiar sounds collectively. That evening was their first public performance as a group. On that occasion, they played alongside an edited excerpt from the silent, avant-garde film, Man with a Movie Camera, by Dziga Vertov. The film was part of WORM's in house archive. That was pretty much the amount of information disclosed to the public in the

online promo (FB event) and programme notes.

In their accounts, the group described the challenges the film posed:

> AI: [W]e had a fair amount of struggle with how to play with the film. [...] [I]t was kind of like a repeat of learning how to play as a group again—so like the same process as soon as we came out of—we sort of started [to] seem as a group and then we threw in this new element and we did it all over again.

These challenges led them to create a slightly edited version of the film:

> D: [I]t was kind of difficult with like the pace of the film and finding space for musical variation in that so I was trying to, um, find space, create space, I mean, by slowing things down or cross-fading things [...] or fade to black a few times but just try to break up the rhythm of the movie which is pretty consistent throughout.

At the beginning, Laura reported being stuck thinking of a meaningful way to relate to, and not accompany, the film. After talking extensively about it, they decided to "not be a slave of the video" but relate to it more or less like another player:

> LA: [F]or a better understanding you can think about [...] that kind of movie like another drummer. Because um—for example when Dalton comes up with a rhythm, or something is something very strong [...] you can decide to relate to it or not, for example, no? And that was the idea, that just free ourselves to do something meaningful [...].

Another band member, Aidan, reported being frustrated with how the film never stopped, as well as with the lack of any adaptation to what they were doing (since it was a playback). He needed to ignore it, in order to work with it:

> AI: And I think, the way that I dealt with that personally was just to not look at it a lot of the time. And sometimes I would look at it through someone else who was looking at it or, yes, just catch a glimpse [inaudible words]. But I, my personal approach was just to step back [...] in a way that I wouldn't with any of the other people [...].

However, the more they rehearsed with the film, the more comfortable that relationship got:

> LA: And as we get used to each other for playing [...] it was the same with the movie. Like, when we rehearse a lot and knowing [...] which scenes come first [...] then we get used to—. Yes, you have in mind your possibilities more or less but it's always surprising to find other possibilities to what to do in that kind of image and movement —because it was full of movement [...] that movie.

The general consensus was towards building a more complex relationship with the film rather than accompanying it. In terms of narratives, there was certainly the narrative of the film and the micro-narratives of the elements they introduced.

> LA: Yes, but, for me free impro in itself is often un-narrative [...]. So, and I see our group—like, the kind of music we are making for me it's full of drama. Because it's [...] often about gestures, no? [...] [S]o yeah, for me it's something that is already in our

music.

However, any explicit link was avoided:

> Y: I remember Aidan saying when there's this scene with the train that comes [...] the most obvious thing is [...] to do a crescendo, I mean. And, we spoke about it and we said we should avoid this. That's why we shouldn't look to the film much time. But, in this—letting the film affect us, in a way created [...] a narrative—but, more abstract, I think.
> LI: Yeah, I think we kind of glanced at it, you know, every now and then—and then just focus on sound as a primary, you know. But, we kind of like, oh ok, this is it, and then we played things with that. Yeah, totally not all the time.

Turning now to the accounts of that night. Every band member felt that compared to practice, the live performance was their best version of playing with the film. Also, they were really happy to have received positive feedback from two friends, who understood their intentions:

> AI: And one thing that Daniele told me after made me really happy. [...] [H]e said he was watching the film and we were all playing with the film in a really beautiful way and then he looked at us and no one of us were looking at the screen. [laughter]
> [...]
> LA: Or, just, Ricardo told me that he didn't watch once the movie. And for him was interesting because was, like, we were watching our *score*[8]. So, the same when you watch musicians that are playing a score, you don't want to watch the score.
> D: Unless you're a musician and—. [laughter]

For Laura, every show has different connotations, which correlate with the venue it takes place and the line-up. Being sensitive to those hints, musicians might shape to some extend their performance:

> LA: But, in general for example it [line up] depends because I think it's something that affects you. Because [...] if you know [...] who is playing after or before you, you get an idea of the situation—like, no, so match my music with these kind of music or the situation—what is about, no, the situation—it's a random thing that I'm here or not, what people expect from my music, no? [...] But, yes, could be an issue. But, like, not so big [...] you end up doing your stuff [...] because it's what you do and you don't want to shape too much, of course, about the situation. [...] [I]s your mindset that change, no? Like, yeah, playing at the conservatory you know means something [...] playing at WORM it's something different. [...] [S]ometimes, yes, like, playing at the conservatory is playing for musician—sadly is like this.

In their occasion, the fact that they played first in an unfamiliar space/situation gave them the freedom to be themselves. “I think we were lucky because being the first [...] in a new space, [...] you are not influenced by [...] the live act that was—before. So, we

8 The music score is a guide to performing a piece of music. In the case of the free improvisation it was clear that they were playing alongside a silent film. Ricardo, from the audience and friend of the musicians, used a clever metaphor to describe the audiovisual relationship: the film was the score to the music.

were lucky".

As a general impression, it felt different playing at WORM, compared to a rehearsal space.

> AI: I'd never been to WORM before—but I felt that it was, like, a place that has its own story, or purpose, or something that we are really entering into. Something that's really different from playing here[9]—like, this place [...] is designed for anyone to come in and to do whatever they want—which I guess maybe WORM does too. [...] I felt more shaped by my perception of what it was.

The majority thought that WORM's distinct aesthetic matched their own; "[w]as like a free improv space" (Liew). That, made them feel supported:

> Y: [I]t wasn't so much different the aesthetic of WORM than our free improv. Because, yeah, it's literally WORM [...] also as an architecture—how the architecture of the building is and also what things are inside—it's like [...] somebody collected the random things [...] to create something. So, yeah, in a sense it's like a free improvisation.
> AI: [I] felt like supported by it.

Yannis added to that how the set-up primarily served them; as he had his back to the audience. The stage was placed in the middle of a pub, enclosed between two walls. Their seats were set up to face the film, which was projected on the left side of the stage. That choice gave the audience a side view of the performance:

> Y: We felt like we were supposed to play anyway and if somebody comes to watch us it would be nice [...] we would have our gig, like, [laughter] in our little nest.

However, Laura, in particular felt that the open space limited a certain potential of the group:

> LA: [O]ne aspect that I really enjoy in playing with this ensemble is that we can have this [rehearsal] space that is very silent and so [...] we can have this super low dynamics and actually [...] when we have this situation of super low dynamics [...] every sound [...] it's in the music. [...] [L]ike when Dalton is searching for some of his stuff for making noise, no? That is part of the—. And then we listen back [...] to the recordings that we make [...] every little sound is there. And I think that [...] we are aware of this and we make these things music. I can't have the distinction between the music and the background sound or accidental sound when I play with these guys. So, that's very nice. And it's something that you can't have in a situation where there is audience that is not super silent, or it's like [...] people just go to the bar, and then watch a song, you know, listen to music, move around. So, it's interesting to have both [...].

At the same time, it was decided to amplify the acoustic instruments (cello, saxophone) in order to have a more balanced mix. Aidan confessed he did not usually play plugged in, so that was a unique experience. His fellow players also appreciated that change, because it helped them hear his "nuances" more clearly:

9 Aidan refers to their rehearsal space, the BEA 6 studio in the Institute of Sonology.

> AI: I'd say that was pretty radically different—it's hard to describe even. [...] I have a pick up built into the bridge so [...] it's very sensitive to things that you do to the body of the instrument and any locations. So, it was fun to be plugged in and then be able to play with that—was sort of like a new vocabulary [inaudible words] or that was too small to be included before. I don't know, is nice because like my playing style tends to be [...] in the smaller things.

For Dalton. their performance was close to his ideal listening conditions:

> D: Also, I think it's a nice balance between—like Laura was saying—like, an attentive audience in like a quiet—quietish space so you can hear things but at the same time it's relaxed and it's a bar so I think it was a nice combination between those two elements that don't always go together very well.

Let me now turn to the ways the players related to the audience. It can be seen that despite the collective agreement on their music, each of the players had a unique way of dealing with exposure:

> LA: [I] was not looking at the audience too much but the few times I did I see people very, like, concentrated and I was happy of course about it. [...] I never look at the audience when I'm playing. Is something that make me nervous [...]
> Y: I was closer than the guys to the audience so [...] I couldn't avoid listening to stuff when I was playing. So, I just let it in and—yes, sometimes [...] I tried to play louder because I couldn't hear myself. Because I was literally, like, [laughs] 50 centimeters—and my ears was like facing in the wrong direction. [...]
> LI: Yeah, I saw a few friends of ours came in, so I was just like, ok, feel homey so I'm {just playing. But I'm—}
> Y: {Yeah, that was the feeling.}
> LI: during the performance [...] I didn't look at them that much—. [...] [G]enerally I like to you know, just like searching who are now before playing, [...] and I [think], ok, I know you, right feel good—and then I can start to play, yeah.

However, once the show begun, everyone reported feeling concentrated on playing:

> LI: [I] wasn't concerned [...] as much as I thought I would cause I feel [...] like when they start playing and me start playing I was more focusing on sounds [...] I wanted to hear more, like, what Dalton played or what Laura played, or something like that. So, my focus was towards our group more than the audience. Yeah. But, I've heard good things so that was good, after all.
> A: And the rest, the same?
> Y: Yeah, more or less.
> AI: I think during the performance I was not concerned and then around the performance I was more concerned.
> D: You mean before and after? [the rest consent]
> AI: Or, not even after as much because then I was happy with it.
> D: Yeah. Yeah, I feel like, at least for me during the performance I was surprised by how focused I felt and how focused I felt everybody else was. Like, even besides the considerations of being in a performance—just, compared to the rehearsals I thought it was much more focused—in terms of like the focus on playing and everything.

Overall, they considered themselves really lucky to have played for an audience that was in the mood for listening, many of which were friends from school:

> LA: And also I think we were lucky with the audience because, we played [...] in hours that not so much people were in and the people that were in they were like in the right mood for listening. And then I think the audience was very much more noisy.

Seeing their friends from school in it was definitely an asset. However, Laura mentioned the shared feeling that it was equally great to see non-familiar faces enjoying their improvisation:

> LA: I don't know—personally I feel more happy when I saw that there are not all musicians. Because now we are in this bubble and you are always playing for musicians —I like musicians, I like a lot the people that are here and want to and all—but, like, [...] where is the world, no?

Compared to playing in sit down venues, where the people in the audience cannot move freely around, having people deliberately listening to the whole performance at WORM's foyer was perceived as a greater accomplishment. Audience engagement fed their drive and focus and overall contributed to the successful outcome:

> AI: Yeah, the feeling of having people listening [...] I think that's what [...] made it what it was and that's why I think it was our best version of the film and I attribute [...] a lot of things to that—the focus you were talking.
> LA: Yeah, it was not predictable because the space in itself is a little bit—as we said, not like a space that is a stage, no? So that was why I was like, hey, they are listening. They couldn't—because there is a bar, they have beer, they can walk around and all. Is not the kind of—for example if we will play in Studio LOOS[10], no? [...] It's like a place super silent. You have to listen—because you are like on a chair, there is nothing around you—and maybe you are so bored but you can't show it, like you can't just walk around or grab a—
> D: And the floor is just so squeaky that if you wanted to leave everybody notices. [laughter]

4.1.2 Fani Konstantinidou – Sound Topographies #6 – live electronics – 30'

Fani Konstantinidou is a sound artist, composer and music researcher based in the Netherlands. Sound Topographies is an ongoing research project focusing on cultural identities in music composition by gathering recordings from different places and spaces as well as recreating real and imaginary landscapes during the live performances. The Sound Topographies live series, is a series of soundscape compositions based on recordings made in various locations. The 6th edition which was presented at WORM as part of the *WPB Sound House* event (13/01/17) was based on recordings made in Greece and the Netherlands; "from soundscapes to acoustic instruments that I was able to find

10 "Studio LOOS is the hot spot for new music in The Hague (NL). It is a workspace, laboratory and public presentation space for research, experimentation, development, innovation and the production of interdisciplinary electro acoustic music, sound and audio art, improvisation and composition, monomedia, bimedia, polymedia and hypermedia" ("Concept « STUDIO LOOS", 2017).

there or things that are mostly associated with the culture somehow". Fani has been fascinated for a long time with the creative potential of playing with the listeners' perception:

> F: I was always interested in the perception of the listener in order to create something, so I was interested [...] in combining things that a person can recognize and things that they cannot recognize when you create electronic music, that's why I was also interested in collaborating with musicians who play acoustic instruments, so I can create something non-realistic with the electronics and something more realistic with an instrument that everybody can understand.

With the Sound Topographies compositions, her intention has been to expose the cultural associations of sounds and at the same time transform them[11]:

> F: But, yeah, this [interest in the perception of the listener] just slowly went into the direction I am now and that's the reason why I am in general using a lot of recordings. I don't make sound through my computer—only computer generated. I process recordings but I don't really create the sound in my computer because I am interested in this, um, little information that might get you the idea that you know where this sound is coming from. So, that's why I also create the groups of sounds and that's how I create the whole form.
> [...]
> F: with these specific pieces now and also the one in WORM, I think the most important is [...] to make clear the cultural element. Because [...] I find interesting the fact that it can be very positive or negative depending on where you are from. Like, when I use some recording of a Greek instrument some Greeks might love it and some others might hate it [...]. So, I want to show a little bit, um, other possibilities of using those instruments and to make clear a little bit some elements that are showing where is this coming from.

At the same time, that has been a fluid intention, which goes hand in hand with making aesthetic choices on the sounding outcome and her performances:

> F: But I cannot say what was the inspiration because it is just something that goes through the years. Of course my inspiration is, like, the sounds I am exposed to. So, I am Greek living in the Netherlands [...] my theoretical research is based [...] on the cultural influence in the compositional process of these two countries, so I am interested in those sounds, but other than that if I go to Poland—which I did before—I will make some recordings there too [...] in the performances I am a little bit more flexible I guess, where I am getting the sounds from.
> [...]
> F: Well, I would say it started mostly because [...] in my PhD research I am trying to prove a point, that the cultural influence is really important on how we compose music. And that's how I started, just experimenting. But of course when you make music is not just research [...] the aesthetical part matters—and where you want to go and how you

11 Hill's study on the interpretation electroacoustic audiovisual music stresses the significance of making a work that presents the listener with a clear context for interpretation. That can be achieved by creating "thematic contexts for materials and compositional ideas" (2013, p. 287). He cites the example of Smalley's *Wind Chimes*; firstly parts of unprocessed source material (wind chimes), then parts of development and sound transformation, which is akin to Fani's approach.

> want to compose and how do you want it to sound—and yeah, then it changes because I am more open in using different sounds. I am not just super strict on, oh I am gonna use this because I want to prove this point.

To be able to create a dynamic composition that can be actualized live, Fani prepared the sound material and basic structure of the piece at home:

> F: [I]n general I have quite specific order of the events because [...] I feel—when you perform with electronics it can be quite chaotic, so I like having a bit of some basic structure and form. [...] Before I play, I just create some sort of groups, like some sort of parts of the piece. Is a very general structure—like beginning middle end, let's say. So I have these 3, 4, 5, 2 groups, whatever—depends on the performance—and then I just work with these groups, let's say, to create the parts live, real time. [...] I process the sounds [on the spot]. Although I have an idea how I am going to do everything and perhaps start with this group of sounds and then go to this group of sounds and then to this, I mostly process live and I switch between the different parts.
> [...]
> F: sometimes I process the sounds already at home because they are not—and I want to make sure that is going to be something in between and I create the sound—like, I have this field recording and then I have the same field recording already processed and then I use these already processed—I reprocess it in the live set. [...] [S]ometimes they also play as they are but I always add something more because I am not so much interested in just flat recordings, and because I always want to have this kind of contrast of real and non real, so that's why I don't play—even if I play a recording that it has no processing at lot, I just keep it for very short and then I always want to go somewhere else with it.

During the interview, she could not recall the exact order of the parts she played, but shared some of her basic compositional strategies that serve the overarching narrative of transformation:

> F: [Y]es, there is a narrative in general [...] the form of the piece is my narrative. [...] I always have a part that I focus mostly on some field recordings, I also have a part that I focus more on instruments, those blend with each other too but for a moment they clearly have their own position in the piece and I do it on purpose because I want to go from this to that and [...] it's the form. But to be honest I don't remember the order of the piece I created because it's not a piece that it exists anyway, I made it for this concert and maybe some parts will be the same or similar for another performance but it will change again so—

On that evening she was on stage with her equipment, which consisted of a laptop, two processing/editing music software programs, two controllers and an audio interface:

> F: I use MAX MSP mostly, sometimes I use ABLETON LIVE [...] lately I combine, I use both. [...] [A]ctually with ABLETON LIVE I don't use much, I use mostly [...] when I want to play my sound files without any processing, I find it easier to control and see when I am turning them on and off. Sometimes I process through it but not much. All the processing I do through MAX MSP.
> [...]
> F: I am controlling the two softwares with the controllers. They are mixed. Each fader is linked to another kind of sound or group of sounds.

> [...]
> F: With the controllers you can just push 10 fingers on the spot and lift up 10 faders. [...] [Y]ou can really affect multiple sounds at the same time.

She noted that the equipment is her instrument of choice because of its highly powerful computation which is made available in highly portable form, and therefore in live performance. Her pieces are made with - and are highly dependable on - the software, so the latter is an integral aspect of their aesthetic. Contrary to what some believe, the equipment does not necessarily hold musicians back from moving while playing, but that kind of visual stimuli might be boring for some:

> F: [Y]es, I consider the equipment an instrument. Because, I very often hear that, oh, but there is this kind of performances with live electronics, you just turn knobs and you are not performing—I find this bullshit because when you play the flute you also just push buttons, it's the same thing for me. I mean, if you feel like expressing yourself through your movement you can still do it. And, actually with the computer you have so many possibilities, it's like endless, literally endless so it's way harder I think to perform. Maybe you can perform without practicing—you can easily improvise with this kind of music—but to learn to perform with it it's much harder, I mean, or the same hard [...]. And the choices you make every time can change the entire piece—even the slightest number you are going to change there—so, I think it's part of the composition. [...] I find it quite nice, I mean—it can be quite boring for some people but I also think it's interesting too—maybe not to have only a computer but turning knobs can also be like a part of playing an instrument so—.

Fani performs on stage mainly out of necessity but she would rather not attract the audience's focus:

> F: [I] am not like a very big performer on stage or something, it's mostly like behind the computer—so I would say my music could also be in the darkness with nobody seeing me [...] because I think that's the point, I don't really care about seeing me, it's more about listening. But of course [...] people are not used to do that so much, so I don't mind performing on stage, but the necessary thing is not to watch me but mostly to listen. At some point I would like to add maybe some visuals so people don't focus on me but they focus on associations they do with the images.

Focusing on the technical processes, trying to understand, is not paramount for the experience she wants to provide. Instead she hopes that her soundscapes engage the audience and that they give different meaning to different people:

> F: I think what I am more interested in, is to be able to have some listeners being able to understand and some not—so I can compare [...] if I get the chance to talk to them, or even if I don't. I am interested in, like, somebody understanding that, oh, ok, this is at the beach in Greece or this is at the beach in Holland and somebody will be like, something totally new, I don't know what it is and it's interesting or it's not interesting.

She finds that inevitably this kind of compositions need a more trained audience, namely people who are “more familiar with experimental sounds”. However, she does

not necessarily like that it is mostly those people that frequent her shows. “I don't want to have a trained audience”. The fact that she uses some recordings could be something to hold on to, for part of the audience, but at the same time she would like to excite them further:

> F: Many people would say, oh, this is not music because there is no defined rhythm and melody and all these things. [...] I guess since I'm using some recordings, yes [there is something in the composition itself that the listener can hold on to in order to make sense of it]. But on the other hand, because I was always interested in the imagination part, I am also interested if the audience can think of something absolutely different than what it is. So, in general I would say, yeah, if I had the audience, like, in front of me to tell them [...] how should they listen, I would say just to imagine whatever they want—mostly—rather than focus on recognizing things. I think the part of recognizing it's mostly to trigger this imagination rather than force them to think what I recorded.

The ambiguity also pertains to the titles and programme notes she shares with the audience:

> F: Yeah, I give a short description, but it's not so much—it's a little bit with the music but it's mostly about what I am interested in—like, I am interested in the cultural influence in contemporary music right now, I collect recordings and I present them. Mostly, something like this. I don't want to describe forms or bigger concepts because—maybe I have a concept sometimes, like, I am thinking, oh, I went to Samothraki, I made these recordings and for me the concert could be how I spent my day even—in a piece. But I am not interested in sharing this. This is just the way to put things together for myself.

Turning now to how that performance is accommodated in venues. Some elements cannot be fully decided in advance. As mentioned earlier, in order to create her form, it is essential for Fani to try out things at home, but she also expects some improvisation and on the spot choices:

> F: Yeah, yeah, [I prepare at home] many times—as many as I have time, I don't know, depends. [...] [W]hen I leave the house I always think like, ah, it's ok, because I always have room for improvisation. Even if I don't feel very confident with something I think, ok, I will see how it goes and then change it a bit on the spot.
> [...]
> F: No, it is not an improvisation. No. Of course [...] when you have electronics is impossible to have hundred percent control. It's not like you have a score and you have to follow it exactly the same—which I think even if you have a score you can play it different anyway—but it's mostly composed. Of course there is some improvisation in between the parts and you observe a little bit the situation—how are you listening to yourself, how is the audience, one part can be shorter or longer.

More specifically, she might need to take into account the acoustic characteristics of the space she performs in:

> F: Technically of course there is a relationship—it can be very reverberant, or not reverberant, or too noisy, or less noisy. [...] I know also in the soundcheck how loud it's

> going to be, what kind of dynamics I will have and—and it's never the same because the soundcheck is an empty space and when you play it's not. That's also why I keep a little bit of improvisation because you see [...] how it goes out in the audience.

In the case of WORM, she was dealing with a noisy environment and a weak monitor so she did not have a clear idea of what was coming out to the audience. Overall she was satisfied with the end result, apart from the quiet parts. She also explained that noise becomes problematic only if the production is not so thought through and the musician does not adapt to the dynamics:

> F: [I]n a technical way it [noise] affected me because [...] I couldn't concentrate some times but I don't think that this had to do with the audience I think it had to do with my position and how I was listening and how loud was my monitor so yes, in that sense yes [...] I was not 100 percent aware of what is coming out.
> [...]
> F: I would totally take out the very silent parts. [...] [N]ow I remember more and more —I think the biggest, um, disappointment, let's say, like what I was not able to know at all what happened outside was the quiet moments—like when the dynamics where quite different. [...] But I don't think it was the problem with the space—that's something you actually you are responsible, because you are playing, so you make a decision.

In general, loud spaces and lack of attention is not ideal, but not a huge problem for Fani, if it means that her music reaches people that would not come in contact with it otherwise:

> F: I don't really mind [noisy venues]. I mean, in general, of course every musician would prefer to play in more silent places and get the attention but I also like the other way around. In general I am interested in accessibility. [...] [T]his music [...] is considered difficult. So, I am interested in bringing more people to these kind of concerts—not only mine. So, I don't want to be very demanding on this aspect.

Fani used to compose music for "more academic, more like tape music for multiple speakers and multichannel compositions" which were not possible to be played live. However, outside of the academia there is limited accessibility to special equipment, theaters etc., which limited the multichannel compositions she could present. She has shifted toward "the live electronics, mostly computer—and sometimes collaborating with musicians with acoustic instruments too" where it is most of the times for stereo:

> F: Yeah, in general in my set up I always have four channels because in case I have four channels—I used to like a lot the multichannel but lately I adapt the composition with the space. Because very often I don't have this luxury to find four speakers in a concert.

Also, she enjoyed the stage she had in WORM, because it was casual and provided a sense of belonging. She particularly enjoyed that her spot was on a shared table with other performers and that she was not in the spotlight. Based on her previous comments,

that set-up could also de-emphasize her presence and let sound take over:

> F: I liked it a lot. I liked that I was standing, I liked the position in general in the room. Yeah, I think I liked it a lot, I think it was nice. The table was nice—I felt nice that it was this big table and I was sharing with other artists and everybody had his spot. I think this [...] makes you feel a little bit closer to—like you belong to a group of people. It felt a bit more casual but in a nice way.

Lastly, Fani commented on the link between her curated selection of media from WORM's library, which was displayed in the cabinets next to the stage, and her music.[12] Also she talked about how she did not try to match with the rest of the line up.

> F: [I] helped you curate the library there and the things I chose are the things that influenced me all these years, which was reflected in the performance anyway. So, I don't know [...] I didn't go, like, according to what we chose I played. I think I chose what is more interesting to me anyway. So, it was influenced in a way.
> [...]
> F: No, I didn't try to match with them. But I think we already knew that—and when—look, you as a curator when you invite, you know that these things can go together, right? So, I didn't try and I don't think they tried—I don't know what they did. But I think we all knew that we can be in the same event, sort of.

4.1.3 Jaap Blonk – Excerpts from the YappiScope – 40'

Jaap Blonk was no stranger to WORM. The Pirate Bay Media Archive already had a few of his works and on that evening acquired a few more; the Six Sound Poems, Jaap Blonk Leest Theo Van Doesburg, Klinkt, Polyphtong, Deep Fried, Hubeblo - Geneva, Lifespans, Songs of Little Sheep, August Ananke, Traces of Speech. Upon invitation to headline the event, Jaap decided to participate, even though the conditions were different than usual, as mentioned in our email correspondence. “Speaking about intention: please know that my intention in contributing my performance was: to support WORM and your archive. Normally I never perform for so little money”. He specifically asked to be announced and also said a few words himself when he went on stage. Since Jaap is a self-taught composer, performer and poet with 40 years of activity, the online promo was stripped down to include information for the show at hand, the YappiScope. The text used in online promotion was retrieved from his personal website and reads as follows ([omitted text]):

> Jaap Blonk is a self-taught composer, performer and poet. The YappiScope is Jaap’s first full show with visual projections. [It is in ongoing development, new inventions being added frequently]. It contains new videos, scores he wanders through, interactive animations, live sound to silent films and other new multimedia work. [It was

12 A parallel exhibition of a curated selection of media from WORM's archive was running throughout the evening. The audiovisual items had been selected by two of the performers, Fani and Yannis, on the basis of their preferences and inspirations.

> premiered in San Francisco Cinematheque in 2012 and subsequently shown at other places in the USA, Canada, South America and Europe]. It will be the first performance of it in the Netherlands.

In the interview he explained how he devised the title YappiScope (linguistics):

> J: As it was my first programme with visuals, I thought it was appropriate to include 'Scope'. Then, many times my first name was written (by non-Dutch speakers) as 'Japp' or 'Yapp'; this last variation come closer in pronunciation to the correct one, so I chose that in the title 'YappiScope'.

Turning now to Jaap's intentions, expectations from the audience and experience of playing in WORM. A recurrent theme in Jaap's responses to the questionnaire was that the YappiScope is not a composition. "As I said, it is not a composition, it was an on-the-spot choice from my audiovisual material [...] I have to repeat: there was no compositional process, every piece has a different history and source of inspiration". Unfortunately he did not share the sound and visual source(s) of the pieces he presented by saying it would take long to list everything and that he did not remember the exact pieces he played. His performance did not have a specific inspiration. In general, he is inspired by "life, literature, music and nature". In the interview he mentioned that in order to determine whether an idea works or not, he records his try outs and listens back to see how he likes it. So, considerations about the audience do not really come up during the creative process.

The performance was not about "anything specific except the combination of sound and image". He regarded video and sound almost equally important for the creation and experience of the YappiScope. "Maybe the sound is a little more important". There was no communication intent or methods to bring a message across. "I didn't try to communicate anything else than I was showing. I hope it gave spectators some experience and didn't leave them indifferent. Everything [that] is right there is the work shown, nothing left hidden". Still, he hoped to excite the audience. "Mostly every spectator is free to make up her/his own narrative. It's nice if the imagination of the spectator is stimulated in some way". Also, his music does not cater for a specific type of audience/listeners. "No, none of my art has an intended audience. It is for everyone". The way he structured his act was that he presented several pieces and addressed the audience with short introductions before each piece.

He used a variety of software in his performance "C++, MaxMSP, AC Toolbox, Processing, Ableton Live, LiSa, Isadora, athenaCL and some audio and image editing

tools". When asked about the importance for the audience to recognize the technical processes involved in the making, he replied that "[f]or some pieces this may make the experience of the spectator more rewarding, but for most it is unimportant". Also he does not think that the detectable technical processes are an integral aspect of YappiScope's overall aesthetic. "I don't see why this should be important". Apart from his laptop, his equipment included a joystick to control the computer sounds. He incorporates controllers so the audience has some link with why the sound changes. In the interview, he mentioned that the connection between the performance/performer and the sound being produced should be such that in some way it is meaningful to the audience.

The YappiScope was made for stereo system but he has also created pieces for multiple speakers. In his webpage it is mentioned that "[i]t is on offer for venues with good projection and sound facilities". He emphasized that in our interview as well. "It obviously benefits with a situation where every audience member can see and hear the work". Thus he was disappointed from the situation at WORM. "For most people their listening experience at this event was just chatting with their friends, I think". He was also inquired about the extent to which the situation determined or limited his on the spot choices. "The circumstances were so unfavorable that in the end the choice didn't matter at all". At some point, he went off the stage and walked around the foyer; was that planned in advance or an improvised move in response to the situation? He explained:

> J: My performance was maybe less subtle than usual, because 90% of the audience could see nor hear my work, because of the lay-out of the space, and because most people came there just to drink. As I decided to include my piece 'At Face Value', this always involves sound moving through the space, that's why I walked through the audience.

4.2 Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two female and five male attendees with a mean age of 31 years. To determine the participants' backgrounds and field-specific experiences, the seven interviewees were asked a few introductory questions about themselves. This section inquired about respondents' age, place of residence, ethnicity, gender and familiarity with the arts (occupation, education, hobbies and interests). This information has demonstrated different levels of training and experience

with (experimental electronic) music; in some cases it also displayed familiarity with the presented pieces and/or performers in particular. Furthermore, it has revealed the participants' tastes and aesthetic dispositions, as well as motivations for attendance. Overall, this information has lent insight into the participants and their aesthetic experiences, as influenced by their acquired knowledge in the artistic field. Also, it has helped provide a rationale for distinct interpretations that were found to be grounded in particular incidents within a person's lived experience. What follows is an exposition of the seven participants; the first two being those with the lowest level of specialized experience in the arts.

Phillip (P)—*male, 28, French, NL*—Has studied Engineering (Bachelor) and Computer Science (Master) and was at the time doing European Volunteer Service for an association about Esperanto language in Rotterdam. He did not have any formal art training, but was interested in art and its possibilities in computer science. He also had "modest" writing and music hobbies. The frequency with which he attended similar concerts was low (yearly) and it was usually in bars, because he found it cheaper than concert halls. He had been to WORM three times in the past (for theater, Performance Bar). Phillip used the feedback form starting with the OLF#2 and finishing with the Sound Topographies.

Emma (E)—*female, 22, Dutch, NL*—Holds a HAVO Diploma (major in art) and studied for one year in HBO for Communication and Multimedia Design. At the time, she was working in the Horeca sector. She did not have any formal training in the arts; she even questioned the need for it: "I don't believe in schools so much, I believe more in like educating yourself also and I do read a lot on arts and music". She has been playing bass guitar/keyboards and drawing. The frequency with which she attended similar concerts was low in comparison to most other participants (monthly or bimonthly); usually at WORM or at Roodkapje in Rotterdam. WORM was a hangout for her for its film screenings, concerts, the Performance Bar or Kunstavond. She was also part of its volunteer team. Emma used the feedback form while listening to the first two pieces, "the sound fragments [OLF#1] and then improvisation stuff".

Ryan (RY)—*male, 30, British, NL*—Has full school education (GCSE up to A Levels: Fine Art, History of Art modules), a year of Art Foundation and a 3 year course in Graphic Design and Illustration (print making/book binding). At the time, he was studying at the Sonology (one year course) and was working remotely for a screen printing company in London. He has been playing bass guitar and recording his own music for more than a decade. Most recently, he has been building custom-made instruments with an intention to fully design his performance. His first visit to WORM was just a week before the show, for a beer with friends. He had liked the space.

Gania (G)—*female, 29, Israeli, NL*—Has studied Composition (Bachelor) and Computer Programming (Bachelor) in Jerusalem and was working as a composer and music teacher. As a composer, she has participated in a residency with a contemporary ensemble in Jerusalem for two years. She also enjoyed improvising with her violin and voice. At the time of the interview, she was studying at the Sonology (one year course). It was her first time at WORM.

Roberto (RO)—*male, 37, Italian, NL*—Described himself as a "freelance software developer, student and musician". He has studied improvisation, jazz, electronic and computer music and held Degrees in Electronic Engineering and Jazz Music and Improvisation. At the time, he was studying at the Sonology (1st year Master). He had played in avant-jazz projects and was active in the free improvisation context. Occasionally, he composed electroacoustic music, improvisation, or pieces for improvising musicians. The frequency with which he attended similar concerts was very high (almost weekly). It was his first time at WORM.

Richard (RI)—*male, 23, British, NL*—Described himself as "a student and semi-professional musician". After completing the International Baccalaureate in New Zealand, he studied Music at York (musicology, performance, composition, music technology modules). At the time, he was studying at the Sonology (one year course). He has a mixture of experimental and commercial projects, one of them being a collaboration with Ryan. The frequency with which he attended similar concerts, was quite high (once or twice per month); especially in Studio LOOS, a venue in The Hague

(Ephémère evenings). It was his first time at WORM.

Tim (T)—*male, 49, Dutch, NL*—Has studied Architectural Design in the Arts Academy and was working as a designer/animator/illustrator. He mentioned that he had "always" played music (bands, producer, duo/solo live electronics project). The frequency with which he attended similar concerts, was very high (at least once a week), in venues like Studio LOOS and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague and bars like MONO in Rotterdam. Since discovering the concerts of electronic music, seven/eight years ago, he has been listening to it less at home. He has been going to WORM for concerts, but was his first time seeing something at the foyer.

4.3 Audience Responses

The aim of this research has been to investigate audience interpretations of three experimental audio(visual) works and their presentation, in seeking the impact of contextual information and the space in interpretation and facilitating audience engagement with the work. The previous section has described the sample. The next sections move on to audience responses in terms of the following topics for each work: describe the desire, influence and evaluation of contextual information, observations on the space and staging, the perceived material properties of the work/performance, the perceived meaning and emotional response, the most/least engaging aspects and desire to see more/keep listening.

4.3.1 WORK A

Interpretation of the Work

All of the participants mentioned musical instruments. The description of the materials varied nonetheless. Less experienced participants interpreted stimuli within their own frames of reference. In this case, the term "(free) jazz" recurred in Phillip's and Emma's interviews:

> P: [S]o for me—maybe I will say very basic things, I'm not a musician [...] I'm interested by art but I don't have information about it—so it was a bit like I will say [...] jazz music more—there was real instrument which was not the case for the other.
>
> E: [I] do know a bit of [...] how jazz evolved, and this sounded like the old jazz [...] when they had the big bands [...] so I like that about it. [...] Um, well a lot of it was unexpected because that's [...] how free jazz sounds [...]. [T]hey succeeded in that. Then

> all of a sudden like the guitar [...] was just going all kinds of ways. Yeah, it was quite unexpected but it needs to be that—I expected it to be unexpected.

Even though the term was not mentioned by the FIQ, the participants might have been encouraged to interpret the work using such a context because of the presence of both improvisatory elements and specific orchestration (saxophone, guitars, cello, drums).

Also, it is clear that Phillip felt self-conscious when he was inquired about the sounds he heard and pointed to the clear visual element of musicians playing instruments as he was unfamiliar with specialist terminology. As visible within the following quote, he employed a more descriptive vocabulary to describe the work materials. Interestingly he refrained from judging the sounds, suggesting that he listened with an open mind and was able to accept the use of experimental materials:

> P: [I] know that it is quite unusual music but [...] if you don't try to [...] judge the music depending on what you have heard before I would not have said that I feel it was unnatural, it was just maybe different. And I didn't think oh, it's very strange noise, yeah.

For the most experienced respondents (four out of six were Sonology students) the sonic materials were clear and somewhat standard, that no-one really went into detail. In fact, for Emma, Tim and Richard, the surprise was in how nicely the improvisation turned out, that exceeded their expectations. One interesting comment is that of Ryan perceiving two soundscapes; the instruments on the one hand and the layer of surrounding sound on the other. Surprisingly, Ryan, found the lively atmosphere of chit chat and colorful lighting at the bar to be totally suited for that performance:

> RY: Well there's another visual element of this performance which is musicians playing instruments so is quite clear, you see what you're hearing—there is two electric guitars, [laughs] a drum kit, cello and a saxophone, and the chit chat all around the bar which never stopped—but that's fine. [...] [I]t felt very like an urban soundtrack [...] all about bustle and noise [...] I might be biased as well because I really like those people but it really works, the whole thing I thought it was great [...].

The Free Improvisation Quintet had chosen to present an improvisation alongside an excerpt from the silent, avant-garde film, Man with a Movie Camera by Dziga Vertov, made in 1929. Their intention was to avoid accompanying the film, but rather build a more complex relationship with it. Regarding the perceived meaning of the work, there was a general trend of analytical responses. Most of these comments referred to the relationship between sound and image in the performance, with some participants assessing the audiovisual interactions that took place. The types of associations were of

common source and synchronized materials, or parametric relationships. Only one participant experienced a clear hierarchy between the two media, using the metaphor of herpes for the music “P: [I]t's a game that they have to follow what the movies say and it's a game for the public to see [...] oh, they are not that much good now, or well [...] it's quite well found”. The rest of the responses were more toned down, with comments such as “sounds reacting to film” (T,E), “E: expressing what they saw”, “RI: responding to image”, “RY: semi improvised reactive performance attached to film [...] organic translation”.

There were a few contextual responses that related directly to the materials that were visible within the work and one that was triggered by the lack of visual stimuli. The film shows the progression of one day in the city of Moscow, Russia, or as Phillip said “we are at the beginning of the 20th century and we show you how is life [...] in this city”. Ryan cited “pictures of the city and of movement and [...] sounds reflect that”. Emma, whose view of the film was obstructed and who sat far from the stage, agreed that the music properly communicated the atmosphere of the era. She employed contextual associations to the sounds in order to make sense of what she was hearing:

> E: Um, the music was very intense sometimes [...] and it had nice build up [...] some times it would flow away really nicely and then um, also was very distressed [...] panicky or very nervous [...] also it sounded [...] like people were getting chased [...] at one point it sounded like someone was drifting sadly in the streets [...] then also got very zen and then there was like a tambourine suddenly [...] I also wrote that the music really takes you on [...] a journey through emotions and state of minds [...] at one time it was like this very relaxed, kind of vacation, Hawaii music and then at the other time [...] much nervous, chase. [...] [W]hen the music got a bit softer like a vacation um, I was thinking of [...] those flowers that you see on every surfer [...]. Um, also [...] I saw a picture of the chase in my mind. [...] Then um, the one [...] that [...] sounded like someone was drifting sadly in the streets [...] 'cause I didn't see the images very well [...] the mind always tries to make a kind of story out of it, yeah.

A large part of the participants did not perceive a general narrative. Upon reflection, they suggested that the film's imagery was dominant but it did not have an explicit storyline, or emotional quality and that the music had a similar framing. “G: The movie itself was detached [...] the drama [...] was so in granular cells, it was so small that [...] I wouldn't [...] expect drama from the players [...]”. The way that music related to film had some narrative implications, by getting cues from it (T,RI), evolving with it and reacting faster to it over time (E). The situation was so rich in stimuli that the audience could make their own sense of it. Only one participant, Gania, criticized the loose

intermedia relationship, in terms of the music failing to exemplify the film's narrative.

At the same time, the improvisation was in itself a point of observation. Tim and Richard assessed the quality and diversity of sonic materials, as well as the composition that grew while improvising:

> RI: [I] think they were sort of responding to the images [...] that was kind of their set narrative. But then again the way that they joined everything together meant that it [...] flowed into a constant [...] narrative and things moved on to the next [...] progressed and faded away and tension and release—that [...] thing worked quite well at times. So then there were definitely bits of narrative in there that were really nice. Can't really quite remember the end but I think it ended quite nicely.

Roberto, whose view of the film was obstructed, embraced the limitation to look solely at the musicians and listen; he preferred it that way with free improvisation "RO: [T]here is the risk that the sound is overwhelmed by the image [...] I think it's great mostly in these times to learn to get focused on one sense". Also, he suggested that the film worked as a score for the group to concentrate amidst the noisy space, but the audience did not need to see it. Emotional responses were limited, but all (RI, E) appeared to be stimulated by the sonic elements of the work as opposed to the visual.

Following the pattern of analytical responses, the majority of answers about the most engaging elements were of an intra-musical nature. These responses mentioned the sonic element as well as the sound to film interaction, while film was never mentioned on its own. The majority approved of the particular audiovisual combination; the choices were consistent and made sense:

> RY: [E]verything that you're experiencing is intended to be the piece. The sound is because of the film, the film directs the sound, the film is obviously pre-recorded and old but it's giving a live relevance through the interaction with the performers.

It is possible that the visual element was mentioned less because it was not visible from all sides. Also it could suggest that due to the group's treatment, the visual part did not dominate the experience. There was a significant focus on the form of music, in particular the structures and associations between improvised materials, as well as on the group dynamics, with shifting moments of coming together and standing out. All of the responses which were intensely positive and/or emotional were inspired by the music:

> RI: [I] was looking at the images a few times and I was like oh, that's [...] cool and they were responding to it, but there were some parts that were really nice in the piece that I was just [...] lost in the sound [...] what I liked most about what they were doing was some of the gentle parts [...] there was a really nice moment when Aidan was playing

> [...] some of the base notes on the cello—really softly and [...] Yannis did [...] something with his guitar [...] this texture which arises, like mmm [hums]. And then [...] Laura was doing some nice sax stuff and Dalton was kind of chchchch [mimics drums]. Really nice textures [...] flowing. In and out [...]
> [...]
> RI: And they were quite together [...] not like 100% all the time but when they really [...] went into [...] these moments when [...] everything kind of flowed [...] I think that's [...] the beauty of free improv [...] when it's just so cooperative [...] flows from one person to the other and it's not [...] one person owning the sound.
> [...]
> RI: The most engaging was probably [...] when their [...] virtuosity [...] really came out [...] you could see their expertise—like when Laura was going with her textures and Dalton was doing his drumming [...] getting really into it. [...] And when that all came together—when it was sort of trading solo bits, it was working perfectly.
>
> RY: The best gigs just give you this major urge to leave and start doing something, which is a funny [...] conflict. Um, so that's always there. But [...] I remember feeling pretty focused [...] on the performance itself which for me [...] says a lot about [...] the quality of what they were doing that drew my attention and that's all I'm really asking. I mean if it didn't I might have gone for a cigarette or something, [laughs] but it did. So, I stayed and I watched the whole thing.

This work succeeded in engaging all of the audience. Despite some criticism, none of it was detrimental to the overall positive experience. In the future, everyone would attend a similar event. The stakes were higher for Phillip, Emma and Tim who were not very familiar or overly positive about improvisation. “I am not so enthusiastic about it and this was nice. So, it's [...] like give things another chance”, said Tim. However, participants responding to the question about listening at home and purchasing the music, did so in line with their tastes and buying habits and did not seem to be affected by that positive experience. Four out of seven would put this music on at home or buy it, the same four that did those things in the first place. The common view of those responding negatively was that improvisations are best enjoyed live.

Impact of Contextual Information

Because my respondents seem more knowledgeable when it comes to music and many actually knew musicians from FIQ, another issue that needed to be raised was if they had any background information concerning the particular performance and how this information was interwoven with their motivations, expectations and appreciation.

As might be expected from a group of music students, they had invited fellow classmates to their first public show in person and on social media. Among the seven interviewees, Roberto, Gania and Richard had heard some of them before, but only

Ryan had played with them as a group (in one of the early FIQ rehearsals). On the other hand, Phillip, Emma and Tim had attended the evening for reasons other than seeing the FIQ (will refer to them later). Interestingly, Tim recognized some of the players, but did not know their names. Four out of the seven were familiar with the film; Tim even owned a copy.

Also, it was asked how they felt about the information that was available online and in the programme and if they thought that having more information about the work might help them to understand it better. Phillip gave a positive response, stating that prior contextual information (possibly from WORM's website and the programme) provided a framework for him to expect a different concert and through this knowledge he might have appreciated the experimentation:

> P: [K]new the title, how the event was presented and in which [...] place it was [...] if you don't have the movies and if you don't have the context of the place [...] if you expect you are going [to] like a normal concert and you have this you will say, well it's very strange, why do they do this?

Emma responded in a slightly positive way, saying she would welcome extra information to what was available in the programme but that it was not necessary for her interpretation of the work. However, reading about the date of the film must have colored her interpretation. A case in point would be the various references to the “old jazz”, but possibly the images of the “chase” and the “drifter” too. The intentions of the group and their history might be interesting to know but would not add to the piece. She had found out about the event on Facebook, but did not really read the description. :

> E: I think the live performance actually is the act—the art. [...] [I]s always nice to have additional information but I think this one [free improv] was quite nice without it. You don't need to know who the artists were exactly because I think they don't work together always—

Ryan, Roberto and Richard had a rough idea of the players' experience but no insider information on the particular improvisation. They indicated that the background knowledge only helped get their foot in the door and had little or no impact on their interpretation of the work. For example, Richard showed up pretty uninformed about the evening and mentioned not looking at the programme. Ryan did not see the need for contextual information since nothing about the work was ambiguous. Whereas Roberto pinpointed that the nature of improvisation is so open, that leads to a lack of strong need for extra contextualization:

> RY: [.T]his would be the focus of my evening because I knew people, I had some background and I wanted to see the piece. Everything else was unknown. Um, but having said that [...] I think knowing nothing about their piece and just giving it [...] your attention for a minute it would be quite clear what was happening and it was engaging. And the stage layout [...] had a part to play in that 'cause you could see this dialogue [...]. The background knowing confirmed that I was going to go but I don't think it's necessary to engage with that performance.

> RO: If it's a free improvisation sometimes the background information is not useful because it depends on the evening, the place, whatever. Um, so actually I didn't have any particular expectation. I know that [...] they would improvise, I know a little bit the guys, but ok it was just thinking [...] let's see what they are doing now. [...] [M]aybe if you know an improviser [...] very well then you can say that [...] I am going to this Peter Brötzmann concert and I know that he will play these kind of stuff. Yeah, but in this case it was [...] quite fresh and new and this is something also interesting.

Ryan only referred to the programme for a different part of the evening and Roberto could not remember whether he had seen it.

Lastly, two participants responded in a negative way that they always prefer their own uninfluenced interpretation. Even though Tim found out about the event through Facebook, he only skimmed through the description, focusing on what was important to him (i.e. instrumentation, names, title) and on the evening itself did not see the programme. He was confident about his ability to draw interpretations and did not want to risk being put off by unsuitable information:

> T: I never pay attention to that [programme] actually. Because, I see what happens. And, often […] descriptive stories are not very interesting—or, are not even inviting—sometimes if I read this I wouldn't have gone to this. [laughs] But I'm there—anyway I like it. [...] [S]ome titles—especially with more academic music—are pretty pretentious and sometimes even the tittle puts me off [...].

On the other hand, Gania was especially fond of the silent film-music collaboration and had attended a lot of those concerts in Jerusalem. Thus, she came with particular expectations on that evening that were in contrast to the group's approach. She had noticed the programme:

> G: I think it's a great collaboration, it really works. But, for me I always look for something more than just put the music on. [...] [A] really narration connection. [...] [A]t some points I felt like they were [...] not so connected to the movie in the way [...] I'm expecting with the silent movies. But I know that on other hand they had [...] few days to prepare it so they were not so ready so—it's ok [...].

Even after explaining to her that the band deliberately opted for a loose relation to the movie, she thought that that intention did not match having the film in full screen, indicating the desire to retain her interpretation.

These results show that the work could be interpreted on its own. None of the participants struggled with interpreting it, or desired to have the meaning explained to them. Thus the results suggest that the work was open and easy to understand.

Observations on the Space and Staging

First, the majority of the respondents among the visitors reported some issues with the performance space and surrounding environment. The stage was placed in the middle of a pub, enclosed between two walls. There was no clear separation between the place where the band was placed and where the audience was sitting. There were several sitting spots and a lot of people were standing around the stage. Sound insulation was limited, so the sound leaked from the performance to the nearby bar and vice versa. Having the stage right in the middle of everything, on a busy Friday night, meant that the bar clientele could be heard talking, drinking and eating all around. Roberto and Gania recalled some moments when it was too noisy to enjoy the show, but seemed to have come to terms with it. The situation felt really casual. However, Ryan appreciated the relaxed environment as it took the pressure off of overthinking about the work.

In addition, impressions of the staging surfaced in six out of seven interviews. The musicians were set up to face the film, which was projected on the left side of the stage. That choice gave the audience a side view of the performance. Two divergent discourses emerged. On the one hand, the great majority did not mind, or were even intrigued by the audiovisual setup.

> RY: [Y]ou could see one character, the film and the other character, the band, having a conversation and it was [...] a bit like tennis [...] you would watch the film and then [...] see what that was doing for the musicians and vice versa. [...] I really enjoyed that kind of altered look at performing, I think is something it isn't really considered enough—a lot of performances take the stage and face forward and they'll use the PA and [...] these are things we don't even think about—completely accepted standards. But that's exactly the things I like to try and challenge, and [...] this is a simple way they did it in this time [...].

Also, the proximity to the musicians allowed to observe them closely. On the other hand, there were a few complains. Gania found the particular staging misplaced from the audience's perspective. It felt ironic that only the players could see the movie fully and she resented having to try hard to combine both views. In addition, she commented that because the stage was closed and the instruments were not facing them, “the sound went in-between the room and we got only the threshold”. Richard regretted seeing

Yannis' back instead of his guitar. Ryan would have liked a few less lights around the stage “to draw [...] a frame around that scene”. In light of that, winning over the audience and earning their attention simply with their performance, amplified their value:

> RY: [T]hey were good enough that they had a lot of people actually watching and paying attention. And I really appreciate that when a group [...] earns the audience instead of it being like a few lights down. I think that has its place but when there's a choice and they do it—they get people focused—I think that's just a million miles [...] more of an achievement.

4.3.2 WORK B

Interpretation of the Work

All of the responses made reference to processed sonic materials, with terms such as “drones”, “field recordings” and “ambient”. Philip's reply was more descriptive than the rest and also seemed to justify the unfamiliar material: “artificial sounds [...] not sounds that I would expect to find in nature [...] but [...] not sounds that have been [...] absolutely surprising and [...] not acceptable [...] enjoyable”. Further, there were technical comments about the form of the work, i.e. “note [tone?] which evolves slowly” and “organic elements”, the use of certain tools i.e. “working with a sample bank”, or the amplification:

> RO: I also remember not being distracted so much [...] by the people around, probably because the sound level was much [...] higher [...] it was filling the space very well [...] I was standing in the back but actually I was enjoying it [...].

Regarding the perceived meaning of the piece, participants' responses did not conform only to one category, but with a weighting towards the emotional and intra-musical. Emotional responses described moods and feelings that the work evoked. They referred to the compelling nature of the composition, mentioning a relaxing and immersive but “amorphous” experience. Analytical responses investigated the role of sonic materials and techniques in the emotions felt. However, the participants appeared to be involved in analytical and critical reflection only later, during the interview, probably in an effort to rationalize their interpretations. “T: I'm thinking [...] generally why I like to listen to drones—there's not much happening but still you are compelled to listen. So, I don't know what that is”.

Emotional responses also related to contextual interpretations. Frequent analogies were the self, space and transformation. Phillip built upon the notes he had

made to give a lengthy comment about ideas of "immensity" and "infinity". His interpretation focused mainly upon the meaning of sounds, but to a large extent projected previous experiences he had with works of Eliane Radigue:

> P: I feel it's quite interesting [...] I quite easily feel [...] the abstract um, *agréable*—enjoying—feelings [...] the idea of infinity or immensity of the world [...] and I like the fact that there is [...] an infinite note music [...] which slowly evolve [...] it never dies and [...] you have to be attentive because it slowly changes. [...] [W]hat I enjoyed in Eliane Radigue [...] is that [...] you were wondering, what, I'm hearing voice or [...] is it something less artificial which is hidden a bit by the artificial one—a play like this, which was for me very rich [...] I would have wanted to find this kind of thing. [...] [A]t the beginning I was quite happy with it and then not that much—it was a bit poor maybe.

The artistic intention was to create a seamless process with attention directed within the flow of the work. This characteristic was possibly the reason why everyone indicated there was no concrete narrative, but a trajectory, or as Tim said, "[Y]ou don't go to different places in your head". Three participants cited a linear development in time, leading to a finale of resolution:

> P: [Y]ou feel that there is a beginning at which [...] you create the show because you install new sounds and so on and [...] on the last part [...] you [...] try to have less sounds and [...] go back [...] bit by bit to something very simple which finally stops.

> RO: [I]t's filling your space and your mind [...] so it's quite easy to get lost in that. [...] [M]aybe I was more into it [...] because it let me just stay into it and because [...] the sound helped and the volume [...].

In keeping with the trend of the previous responses, the most engaging element in the work was the unique emotions it afforded the listeners. On the other hand, it is interesting that intra-musical properties of the piece were judged as most and least preferred aspects. The lack of annoying moments, good length and totality of the experience, what Tim called "monolithic", indicated that the composition was cohesive and of consistent quality. In addition, Roberto highlighted with some reservation the sounds of the finale, to an overall balanced experience. On the contrary, Phillip recalled a growing frustration as the work was coming to an end and the composition seeming "too similar". As a result, he was finding the piece too long. However, he suggested that the amount of effort this type of work needs, in order to be listened to properly and stay focused, was one of the downsides to it. "P: Um, the problem [...] it's [...] that you will not enjoy if you are not attentive and if you want to do something else at the same time". It is certain that with time came more noise, which made it hard for Phillip to

stay attentive to the detail.

In the question “would you choose to listen to a similar type of composition again in the future”, the responses were positive, with desire to both listen at home (and even purchase it) and attend a live. Lastly, contrary to work A, the consensus was that there is merit in listening to this in domestic sound systems and in quiet, calm situations.

Impact of Contextual Information

This section provides insight on the information the audience had about the Sound Topographies and how this was interwoven with their motivations and expectations. Out of the seven interviewees, only for Tim and Phillip seeing Fani's act was the primary incentive for attending.

In particular, Tim had been invited by Fani, as well as by a friend who was playing in Noodlebar, the show that followed up later in the evening. His comments throughout the interview reflected his acclimation to the situation and the space; he had been playing live electronics, had seen Fani and Jaap before, was familiar with WORM and knew people in the audience.

On the other hand, Phillip had been curious about experimental music and especially the difference of noise to music and the possibility of noise as music. He was mainly digging free licensed pieces online[13] and had attended a few concerts of electronic music; one in particular with works by Eliane Radigue had made a huge impression on him. The SoundHouse was a good opportunity to be surprised with something new or maybe find something similar to Radigue's. Hearing Fani's online promo made a good impression, which in turn contributed to attending.

Observations on the Space and Staging

Richard, Gania and Ryan took a break after the Free Improvisation Quintet to explore the surrounding space and visit the bar, whereas Emma wanted to check out two events on the same evening and moved to the upstairs programme in WORM's main hall as Fani was starting out. These participants failed to respond to most questions of interpretation but gave some pretty interesting comments about the staging of the act with the help of the footage that was shown to them.

13 Phillip mentioned a French website called Dogmazic where “people can put music [...] often it is very bad but if you are curious you can find interesting things”.

Sound Topographies had a “traditional live electronics setup” according to Roberto, with a musician on stage being busy on her laptop and the devices laid out in front of her. Due to lack of space and enough time for change overs, Fani needed to share a long table with Jaap Blonk and the musicians of Noodlebar that were playing afterwards. Her spot was on the right side, next to an array of speakers and a few participants emphasized she was a bit hidden over there. It was clear that there was not much to see but a great deal to listen and the audience was reportedly pretty quiet.“T: [I]t's much more about the room and the atmosphere and what the sound does in this specific place”.

At the same time, there was a widespread concern among the most experienced respondents, some of whom were playing with a similar setup, that laptop performances are problematic for the audience. It is worth presenting a few of the most referred points. The number one issue mentioned was a sense of ambivalence over the liveness of the act and the fear that it can result in lack of engagement or boredom. The majority of the respondents mentioned that in some laptop performances the gestures of the musician are not directly connected to the sounding result. Ambivalence that comes simply from limited movement or distance could be met by musicians opting for physical inputs and controllers and by organizers putting the act in the spotlight. In this case, the fact that Fani performed from the side of the stage probably resulted in some people skipping her act, thinking that it functioned as a DJ set. “RO: [S]he was over there in the dark and [...] it seems like she was the house DJ and we were supposed to dance over there [...] that was a little bit strange”. In other cases, frustration could arise from not understanding how sound is generated, or simply wishing to see all the “fascinating things going on in their computer which they've worked on and created—programmed or designed” (RY) which in most cases are hidden. That could also be met with exposure, i.e projecting the screen, or preparing a nice presentation and programme notes:

> RO: [I]t's a kind of trusting also [...] because when you are an electronic musician [...] you could have your Ableton Live session and you can just press the space button. [...] But if I trust that you are generating live sounds and you are using—I don't know—Super Collider with the strange algorithms and you are controlling it real time, [...] maybe it's interesting to see that you are doing it. But I cannot know [...].
>
> T: You don't know what I'm doing when you see me playing. And that's always the problem [...] for the audience. [...] They can't tell the amount of live, liveness to it. You can't see if it's a DJ playing mp3s or somebody busy. So, it's automatically more about

> the music itself because of that.

Lastly, two participants from those that missed the actual performance attended to the visual part after seeing the footage, in particular the fact that a specific brand of laptop was used, which was a choice that disposed them negatively towards the piece:

> RY: [S]omething that quite often happens with this live electronics tag is you get the silver rectangle with a white apple on it [...] I feel a little bit shallow in this respect but when I see that it puts me down to zero and the listening [...] has to do all the work to build it back up again. [...] [I]t kind of puts stuff that [...] should be and can be completely fascinating, worth your attention [...] in a bracket, like homogenized kind of shape—especially the apple [...] it's like how on Facebook your picture has to be a square [...] completely standardized and [...] nothing usually to do with what you're hearing. [...] I find it really hard to detach from that visual element [...]. I've started trying to [...] close my eyes at [...] 'cause I'm understanding more that a lot of these stuff is more about what you're really just listening as opposed to watching a performance.
>
> E: I'm usually put off by performances that have a MacBook on the stage. [...] [I]t's just so many people who only go to concerts or things and it's only like this person with Apple computer on the stage—that's usually no for me.

To sum up, a general emphasis on sound with an overall positive experience was noted for everyone who saw the actual act live, whether experienced or not. However, there was a difference between the comments of musicians and non-musicians in work B that had not been seen in work A. This distinction concerns the visual dimension of the performance. Interestingly, the first group commented more on the visual part than the rest, observed things they did not like and suggested solutions. On the contrary, what Phillip was frustrated about was the noise and lack of attention from the public, not Fani's presentation. We can assume that because of their experience in this genre, participants automatically have more demands on how artists present their music. What seems to be of concern to them is the question: what is the special thing about this music played live?

4.3.3 WORK C

Interpretation of the Work

The participants cited the use of voice, language (multilingual, poem, spoken word) and vocal manipulations. Phillip and Richard mimicked the phonetic aspects of sounds i.e. “glu-glu”, “brr” and attempted to compare them to the sounds that specific sources, phenomena and electronic instruments make:

> P: [W]e can imagine a story if we want. I didn't have a precise one but now I think

> about this glu-glu [...] maybe he is [...] [laughs] in his uh, *salle de bains*[14] and he took a shower and [...] he do noise at the same time [...].
>
> RI: I recognized the sound of [...] brr [laughter]. [...] [H]e made a helicopter sound which sounded [...] just like a helicopter [...] sounded like certain synths at times and just the wind [...] liquidy sounds [...] things like that—really recreated with his voice—which was quite amazing.

Regarding the perceived meaning of the work, the majority of responses made analytical comments about the relationship between sound and image in the performance. There was a trend of positive observations about the audiovisual interactions, indicating that the performance successfully blended the two. "G: [Y]ou see that he is doing what he is doing in the purpose of his music [...]". The two media were related in terms of perceived sources and parameters. But Tim and Phillip found most of the visuals superfluous, contrary to the improvisation act, and unrefined (T):

> RY: [H]is visuals were really interesting and strange. You quite often get visuals which are kind of [...] beautiful or [...] what you might say is appealing. A lot of his visuals were quite mundane and then just twisted in a really strange way—that worked really well with [...] what he was doing [...]
>
> RI: [H]e had these water papules that were [...] pouring into something and he [...] made loads of [...] liquidy sounds. [...] [I]t was all [...] soft, cloudy, mushy things and he was [...] creating that kind of imagery with his voice—really matching the image. [...] Oh, is he speaking French here? Yes, is the poem. [...] [A]nd then he grained up the image [...] you could hear that in [the sound] [...] he said the poem first and then [...] completely tore it apart with the sounds of his voice [...] smart.
>
> T: [S]ome visuals were kind of annoying [...]. He had this John Cage piece, I think it worked well with that—was very simple [...] just a few colors [...]. But something else [...] the swimming pool [...] there was something that didn't work for me at all. [watches an excerpt] [...] This really asks for too much attention [...] it didn't add something to what he did, in my opinion. And also, it's just not very sophisticated video. I felt like he found some cheap video trick.

Moreover, all but one hinted at the use of technology. Already the previous quotes contain some examples, i.e. "helicopter", "synths", "twisted", "grained up the image", "tore it apart", "video trick" and there was also a similar comment by Phillip who said that Jaap was inventive with his joystick. Additionally, Ryan approved of the way Jaap integrated the equipment in his performance; in particular his choice to not hide the visual (projection) and kinetic (joystick) elements of his playing and at the same time, with his presence on stage, his choice to emphasize the way he operated his tools. That approach gave the impression that he was playing the computer as an instrument:

14 bath room

> RY: [H]e was using a computer as well but [...] most of his performance [...] was from him, and even when he did the computer you could see him [...] operate it—would be like [clumsy movement], I just turned the thing on and then it would go strange. And so you had this [...] coupling—where you associate the visual gesture with [...] what you hear [...].

Emotional responses were varied and appeared to be stimulated by both the sonic and visual elements. For example, Phillip indicated a pervasive feeling of absurdity and strangeness, incidental to the sounds and self-confidence of the performer. “[H]e was doing unusual noise and [...] was [...] sure of himself doing these strange noise [...] which is not real music [...] it's real music but unusual music”. In addition, Ryan attributed that atmosphere to his visuals. “[H]is own visuals were very kind of disconnected but um, set a kind of a mood”. Also, triggered by “a French poem” and the nationality of Jaap, Ryan's thoughts wandered in extra-musical images and thoughts about countries and cultures (NL, FR, BE).

> RY: I remember during [...] a French poem [...] I was thinking about France [laughs] which I know a little bit. I was picturing this [...] typical idyllic French village with all the classic French characters going about [...] really stereotypical stuff [...] I think he's a Dutch guy. [...] So I was thinking about the connection between the Netherlands and France—if there is one—and then I was thinking the geographical connection is Belgium which literally blends the two. And I started thinking about how that all came about, why is Belgium a mixture of people [...] who drew the borders there. This is the kind of what my brain is doing all the time. [laughter] [...] I think about Dutch people a lot as well [...] while I'm here. I think about the way cultures are, the way people behave in different parts of the world. [...] I'm always kind of trying to look for these distinctions that make people different. I mean even in a country—you can do it in England between places that are quite close to each other, you could start to try and characterize things that make them different [...] well this is a tangent. But yeah, I remember my mind wandering in this way when he was performing quite a lot.

No-one thought there was a given narrative. Richard was sure that Jaap had considered the progression of the pieces he was presenting, as it was paced really well and there was a key moment towards the finale (when he left the stage and entered the audience) that engaged the crowd. Roberto noticed how skillfully he managed to combine a conceptual work, the piece *4'33"* by John Cage, with the rest of the set on the basis of the “physicality” and “intuitiveness” that the whole show had.

Regarding the most engaging elements of the piece, participants' responses did not conform only to one category, but referred to aspects of music, context and emotion. Firstly, the sonic element (materials and form) was a significant factor of engagement. Three participants in particular (RY, RI, P) were taken aback by the breadth and inventiveness of the sonic character and reported that the state of surprise was pretty

consistent throughout the performance. These responses seem to explain at a later phase what was more of an instinctive experience:

> RY: [The sounds of Jaap's performance were] quite chaotic, surprising [...] it was something that I couldn't stop watching because I just didn't know where he was going with it and [...] that kept my attention.

> RI: I never thought that someone could create so many different timbres with their voice, and so much expression [...] resonance, volume, changes in dynamics [...] control over their voice. So, that was really amazing. Um, rhythm as well—. [...] I was kind of blown away by him. I think everyone was 'cause he was amazing. [...] [P]retty damn engaging [...] unique and interesting [...] it's the best [...] vocal free improv that I've seen. [...] he is a pro.

Phillip was having a harder time than the rest to stay engaged for longer periods, which probably showed his limited experience and difficulty in finding something interesting in it besides its originality."[I]t can quickly become repetitive [...] it's original but then you got the idea and I don't know if you want to see it that long". Also because this was the final act it is possible that some struggled to stay fully concentrated amidst the growing noise.

Furthermore, there was general approval of Jaap's realization of the piece *4'33"*, in terms of visuals and overall presentation. Ryan and Robert particularly enjoyed how it was realized in WORM**.** Jaap realized the piece by standing in front of the projection wall, changing direction at times, with his mouth open but without making any sound. There was also a projection of changing colors. The particular interpretation worked well in that specific set-up and space:

> RY: And then he introduced the 4 minutes 33 by Cage and [...] 'cause of [...] the clientele in the venue there was a laughter throughout—most people knew what that meant and then [...] he did it. I've really enjoyed the way that worked and [...] being part of actually paying attention to [...] that performance. [...] [I]t was very noisy at this point but he had the focus of quite a few people. Yeah, I think the piece is [...] about sounds coming in [...] I see it as [...] a slightly rebellious thing as well [...] it puts a lens on this idea of performance and experimental music and I find it really amusing how you can have a guy command people in that way, get them to watch him do nothing [...] I like [...] when things [...] turn upside down in that way.

Moreover, despite the experimental nature of the piece, a common belief among the participants was that Jaap managed to win over the audience. According to Roberto, Ryan and Phillip, his performance stood on the threshold of abstraction and fun:

> RO: [U]sually experimental music is filled with seriousness and a doom and gloomy approach—electronic music mainly. [...] [I]t's rare to see someone who can make you laugh out of this kind of stuff. And this is something really important. [...] [B]ecause he's a performer [...] the lines are blurred. [...] the risk is that they are laughing at you

> but you can also turn serious [...] all of a sudden. [...] [Y]eah, it's abstract but doesn't mean serious abstract—just means that is something a little bit out of this world and [makes you think] oh, what's happening and this is strange, a little bit scary maybe, but then you start laughing. And if you can play on that line I think it's amazing. [...] [T]his is something that we have to learn from theater and [...] performers from other fields that we can be [...] serious on our stuff—but serious doesn't mean that you have to be always worried or angry [...]. Also because you can better [...] create a connection with someone who doesn't know what hell is going on.

Lastly, the majority of respondents distinguished between (dis)liking Jaap's pieces and judging him critically as a performer. Their comments demonstrated that everyone recognized a fantastic performer with a great level of professionalism:

> RY: I could imagine that environment being really off-putting for a lot of performers, at that stage of the night especially. [...] [H]e was totally focused and [...] it really worked. [...] [H]e was clearly experienced and did his thing and it commanded attention. [...] [T]he way the bar was at that point in the evening wouldn't have worked for a lot of people I think [...].

> P: [W]hen he played he was very [...] [laughs] professional [...] what he showed was [that he was] prepared. [...] he didn't show surprise from his own music [...]. He came prepared to do this and [showed]—I will do this and the way my body is [...] is prepared. [...] [I]t shows emotions but which were prepared [...] and uh, which are just here to give feelings to the viewers.

> RO: [J]aap started walking around a certain moment and it was a way to grab attention and to say ok, I have no microphone, I'm here doing this funny, stupid, strange thing but if I walk around and I make you laugh and even if you are not understanding what I'm doing and you are here for drinking your beer [...] I'm just trying to get a connection with you [...].

In the future, everyone would attend a similar event. Three participants regarded the live as a better option to plain listening. Each of them had noticed something different that gave reason to experience him live. Tim emphasized the explicit mimicking, whereas Roberto and Richard highlighted the responsiveness to the situation and the audience, taking action and moving, which was very unique about his act:

> RI: I don't find it particularly interesting when performers are just [...] staring to their laptop the whole time [...] it's so far away from what Jaap Blonk was doing which was [...] such a performance. I think movement is part of—. Maybe that's something the [...] live improv band—could do a bit more as well [...] really accentuate their movements. Because [...] tying musical theater into what you do is always fun [...] like moving about [...] really performing.

> RO: Well Jaap [...] was a peculiar performance [...] in the beginning [...] I thought [...] this is the wrong place, the wrong time, no, we cannot enjoy it. [...] But he chose to keep on and to try [...] to transform the whole situation into something interesting. And actually the most interesting thing is that yeah, people laughed and they were enjoying it. [...] I think that I learn a lesson [...] from him.

Interestingly, in the event of seeing Jaap again, Ryan mentioned he would take the time to educate himself a bit more on his work, in order to better connect with what he was doing. “[I]'m sure there's some sense to what he is rumbling about. [laughter] But to me it was like enjoyable nonsense—which might be the point [...]”. All of the above did not rule out for anyone the possibility to check his releases. Tim already owned some of Jaap's work and would buy more given the chance (especially directly from him as extra support). “I find his music funny”, he said.

The remaining two participants regarded the live as possibly the only option to listen to Jaap again. They both mentioned the sonic aspect of the performance as a negative factor, even though they were engaged by the work as a whole. In addition, the attitude of the performer and the atmosphere created in real time had a positive impact, along with the incentive of a social situation with a low entrance fee:

> G: [I]t [music] was funny—not so my cup of tea but it was bearable. [...] I liked it [...] I would probably not listen to it at home because it's not my type of music but you see that he is doing what he is doing in the purpose of his music. And he has blood, you know—and this are things that I like.

> P: [I] didn't like the music but [...] the strangeness, the craziness and the capacity of the man to do it. So, it was not [...] disturbing in a way that I could not hear it, it was just strange [...] it was impressive [...] to have it being able to do this [...]. It was just like a moment of unusual things. [...] I thought that I got the idea that it was funny at the moment but that I don't want that much to see it at home or something like that.

While the work was recorded as absurd, this was largely a positive factor in Phillip's appreciation. However, perhaps the intensity of the atmosphere caused a situation where he was reluctant to hear something similar in the near future.

Impact of Contextual Information

In the current study, none of the respondents decided to attend the event because of Jaap, but still all but one (Emma) saw his show. Among the seven interviewees, Tim had seen him live and owned some of his releases, Roberto and Ryan had heard of him before, but had no information on the particular performance. The remaining three (Phillip, Gania, Richard) were clueless. Phillip was the only one that gave the online promo a try but was disappointed that he could not find any examples of music. Gania and Ryan reported that Jaap made quite an impression, even before going on stage. His appearance and body language were very intriguing and gave off an air of confidence and experience. “G: [I] saw him at the beginning [...] he was [...] a bit older than all of

us so I was like hmm, who is this guy? [...] He was funny because he reminded me of John Cage in a way". And, "RY: [O]ne of those people that makes you kind of reaffirm your commitment to all this weirdness [...]". Also, his selection as final act in the programme created a lot of hype about him. "RY: [A] headliner is usually something worth watching—you don't get that slot by accident".

The participants commented that contextual information such as the title had little to no influence on their interpretation of the work. No-one payed attention to the programme and only Richard recalled that Jaap was announcing each piece. Also, it could be the case that Jaap did not feel his performance needed extra contextualization and thus left the title "Yappiscope" deliberately ambiguous[15]. Also, no-one responded in a positive way to the scenario of more information, hinting at the desire to make uninfluenced interpretations. Ryan and Richard would love to talk to Jaap or read something of him afterwards, but respected the amount of information he wished to disclose. "RI: It's nice when an audience can really engage with how something was meant to be but it's also nice when they can take their own things from it". Richard did look him up and watched a few of his videos the next day. Interestingly, Phillip stated that the interview sparked some curiosity to explore Jaap's music, even though after the show he had not interest in it.

Observations on the Space and Staging

By the time Jaap went on stage, it had gotten really loud. It was later in the evening and people were moving around more. Three people remembered being less attentive and/or seeing only parts of Jaap. We know that Phillip was joined by a friend at that time (probably due to this he did not give written feedback) and Gania and Ryan returned from the bar at some point while Jaap was playing. Most of the participants were standing around the stage but Roberto managed to find a seat with not so many people around. Tim and Gania were most bothered by the situation and would have preferred a different staging (more upfront, smaller room) to channel the attention to him and be able to hear him better. Tim mentioned how bothered he was this time, compared to when he saw him in the *Ephémère* evening, in Studio LOOS, The Hague.

15 According to Jaap, the title Yappiscope essentially means Jaap's show with visuals; Yappi is a misspelled version of his name and scope comes from the ancient greek word σκοπέω-σκοπῶ which translates to look at, observe etc.

> G: [H]e was kind of isolated and [...] on the other hand it wasn't feeling of a show [...] like everyone talked and you know went to the bar and everyone was hanging. So, he wasn't in the focus. But it was nice. [...] [A]t least if it would be even smaller room [...] but with the attention to him, it would do good for him.

4.3.4 Curation and the Venue

Open Listening Foyer (OLF) as Intermissions

The WORM Pirate Bay team presented three totally different electroacoustic and early avant-garde pieces as a small introduction before the three live acts. The pieces were a compilation of Pierre Schaeffer's *Cinq études de bruits* (1948): "Étude aux chemins de fer" (2'51") and "Etude Aux Casseroles, Dite Pathetique" (3'65" excerpt), Pauline Oliveros' "V Of IV" (1966, 7'53" excerpt) and Luigi Russolo's "Risveglio di una Città" (1913, 3'49"). During the playback the visitor-listener could read pop-up written comments on the waveform of each piece which was projected on a side wall of the 'stage'. The interviews revealed that all participants could recall one or the other part but also treated that time as intermission, to relax, go to the bar, check the rest of the space and so on.

As compared with the rest, Emma and Ryan's responses demonstrated greater engagement. More specifically, Ryan gave a vivid account of his first impressions in the performing space and of how he discovered the OLF:

> RY: [A]t the time we went in there was a big waveform projected on the wall and some sound playing—I can't say I recall it really clearly [...]. It was an interesting one 'cause I also had this leaflet [...] the programme I think it was—so I went refer to that to see what was going on and I think at the time it was listed as a listening exercise and so [...] I remember feeling something initially—because it was Friday night [...] the bar was busy, and despite the good intentions of a few people at the front there was a lot of non listeners, lot of chit chat and with the event being in this space right in the middle it was completely exposed to the [...] whole environment. So, listening exercise [...] became something different 'cause there was a lot of noise going on and then there was a piece. Um, I gave it a go.

On the other hand, Emma was the only one who recalled clearly the first and second introduction piece (and provided written feedback for the first one). For the OLF#1 she cited two sorts of contrasting mimetic sounds; nature and transport sounds (car, train, bird, crickets, wind, whistle and bell). Her attention was drawn by the sonic and structural characteristics and she employed contextual associations in order to make sense of what she was hearing:

> E: [I] wrote down [...] the sounds are telling a story [...] oh yeah, also that there were some contrasts in the sounds [...] there was a sound that was very tranquil [...] zen—and

> then it faded and then [...] a car starting [...]. So, yeah I just went about writing and then things popped in my head or as I started making connections it would be less of loose words and more of what it was together. [...] [A]t several times I could imagine [...] a lake at twilight with [...] the crickets making noise [...] in America [...] in a swampy area. [...] [T]hen some of those softer sounds got interrupted [and] I [...] could see [...] a bell in front of it. [...] [I]t [...] was very visual—could [...] see what the noises represented.

Her interpretation of the work's meaning referred to "movement, traveling, then coming home and then it's night time and maybe just time passing and moving around in that time". She would like to look into similar kind of music (on YouTube) and its background (title was in French, did not notice the year).

For the OLF#2, two participants (P, G) made reference to a section with loud, aggressive, violent noise. That section must have been the OLF#2. Emma recalled that a lot of people in the audience looked irritated, but she did not rush to judgement. The sounds were "very experimental [...] very high pitched [...] actually did hurt my ears a bit [...] in a positive way [...]", she said. She would put this music on at home and even buy it. A point that added to her appreciation was learning that the piece was made in the '60s:

> E: [W]hile the performance was busy you told me some additional information—that it was [...] one of the first experimental, electronic things [...] from the 60s and [...] we [WORM's archive] had the recordings. [...] [T]hat did add to me because this [...] would be very different than if it were made today [...]. Because now we have more equipment and [...] back then [...] still those things you had to customize yourself and [...] experimented much more than now [...].

Moreover, all but one participants referred to the sound and image relationships, while also judging the suitability of the visual for the audio. There was an even spread of positive and slightly negative responses. More precisely, Richard thought it was a cool presentation choice, "a fun new dynamic", Emma said "this Soundcloud kind of waves [...] were pretty matching for the music" and Tim thought it was also a clever way to show the duration of the intermission. On the other hand, Phillip and Ryan were at odds with using the waveform as a visual. "P: [W]as not that useful [...] not very interesting this". "RY: [O]n the one hand helped highlight [...] that there was something specific to listen to [...] on the other [...] is something quite plain [...] a bit below the level of the sound piece". Plus, Richard and Ryan had some reservations towards showing the whole waveform, as it gave away the direction of the piece:

> RY: [I] feel [...] that visual clashes with the idea of listening—when you can see—if you have any experience of that—[...] where it's going, [...] when it's going to end, [...]

> when it's going to be loud suddenly and [...] that foresight is just through a graphic and is probably not an intentional part of the sound piece. Like when I'm working on my laptop [...] if I go to a stage where I want to listen to what I've done I [...] close the lid and just look at the ceiling 'cause watching it go through its phases is a different listening [...].

Similarly, Gania mentioned that the fact that the waveform highlighted information regarding the density of the sound and how it evolved in time could possibly trap the perceiver in one dimension of the work.

The projected text was almost indiscernible as only Phillip recalled seeing parts. Nevertheless, both him and Emma, who were less experienced, supported the idea of reading while listening and while the former would have liked more information, the latter had reservations because it required too much focus for an intermission.

> E: [I] think [it works], especially with these kind of pieces because if you only listen to it [...] it gets to be a bit too much—all those noises for some people. While if you're reading about it while you're hearing [...] it's not so loud anymore [...]. So, then [...] because you know what you're hearing maybe start to appreciate it [...] so I think [...] that it add something written underneath. [...] But then it doesn't feel like a break anymore. It feels like a piece on it's own.

Gania's input testified to it being problematic in the particular curation and staging. She could not see the point of the text, given the fact that it was projected on the side and the font was quite small to pay attention to from far. “If it was much more around and you could discuss on it, maybe [...]” she said. Lastly, the fact that the text was not forced in everyone's face and thus easy to overlook, was a plus for Tim.

Another aspect that the participants were asked to reflect upon was the choice to have the three introductory pieces between live performances, in a place where usually there are breaks. The participants were against silent brakes for the particular event and space. “G: [A] place like Worm I assume that they cannot leave it in silence between shows because it has the attribute of a club [...]”. Also, there was a point from Richard about occasional moments of silence during changeovers. “I think it's always good to have a kind of back up of something going on—even if it's just filling music [...] when you got that many people in one kind of place”. From the data it surfaced that breaks should be relaxed, unfocused and well managed (energy, vibe).

> RI: [I]t's good to have not constant noise but [...] it's still [...] a relaxed break and you're constantly giving people the choice to go and get a drink, [...] check out something else. So, it's fine [...] as long as you keep [...] these kind of things quite low level—like the break thing is quite relaxed—but [...] manage the transitions just like DJing [...]. [I]f you're scattering information as well—like you have this waveform, [...] the other

> things to do and [...] the music—that's immediately just like, oh it's not one thing focused here now [...] there's a few things. [...] [S]o, it works in that.
>
> T: I thought [...] that was good actually because you want to have [...] time in between the acts and this is a very nice way to do it [...]. It was related to what was going on in a sense and [...] you could see how long it was going to take [laughter]. It's a kind of [...] intermission—it doesn't feel like [...] a real part of the performance, with a very fancy break of having an intermission. [...] [T]his would be the point to go to the bar and get a beer. [...] And at the same time you stay a little bit in the atmosphere of the evening. So that worked well, I think. Normally in a bar, they play immediately the wrong music—that's what I liked about this. No, I think it was [...] very good idea, actually—especially with the visual.

At the same time, two participants disputed the choice of the second piece:

> G: [A]fter the concert of the group it [OLF#2] was suddenly changing the environment 'cause it started to be very noisy and they had so warm sounds that it was surprising for me, why they chose to do it like this. [...] [M]y experience with the energy in music is that after a show you need to put [...] music that doesn't reduce the energy of the last performance. [...] [A]fter this kind of experimental show I would either put completely different but delicate one more, like [...] sing songs or folk [...]. I can also put experimental music but I wouldn't push it as they did to noise [...]. 'Cause they had very delicate atmosphere there after the [FIQ] concert [...].
>
> P: [I] feel maybe between the main we could have something [...] different [...] to change a bit the atmosphere and [...] make people [...] repose [...] something a bit less experimental but still on the idea [...].

On the other hand, a recurrent theme among some interviewees was a sense of freedom to engage with this or that element in their own way and that it was very fortunate that there was a plethora of stimuli (i.e. the projected text):

> RY: I think the layout is a good idea—the way they go between um, live performances. The risk of that at an event like this in a venue like this is that [...] they quite quickly take on the role of break time. I'm sure there were a lot of people there who were ready to be engaged throughout [...] but my attendance was more of a social [...] thing. So um, the listening pieces in a way [...] didn't work in that sense but also I appreciate that they were there. I regret that they didn't really draw my attention in the same way [...] the performances did, but [...] I think it's really nice there was something really happening all the time so you could choose when to dip in and out.
>
> RI: [I]'ve no recollection of the writing. Maybe I've had a few beers by then [...]. But [...] I think it's good to have, [...] why not? [...] [S]ome people are going to tune in and be like that's really interesting. [...] I like all these fragments of things that you have in WORM for people to do and to tune into and [...] give people choice in what they want to engage in the different performances and installations [...].

Lastly, many have raised the question of whether this presentation benefits works themselves.

> G: I understand the fact that you have the library and you want to kind of introduce it to people—which is really cool. I think that it would be much cooler if you had some kind

of night in [...] Worm that you just—you put those pieces and people come and they can listen and they can talk and then can be in the pink boxes and they can do whatever they want. But when you put it in the context of concert [...] people will not listen to it—it will be just on the side [...]. 'Cause they will see a show now and then they have a break and then they go to grab a bier or to eat or to talk and then it's just there and no one is listening—especially to this kind of music 'cause this kind of music needs to have a listening [...].

E: I think this was a good context—maybe not for the whole audience but for a part that came for the *Sound House*—that really came here for a listening experience. I think I would enjoy [...] maybe a collaboration with a visual artist [...] in a gallery or in a museum that they would have images combined with the noises. [...] [I]t's nice, so you have the experimental aspect the whole time [...] it's kind of continuing—but [...] it holds some people [...] go for a smoke or a drink because they really might feel that this is also a part [...] of the sound pieces. So, I think it worked but [...] it also has some pros and some cons.

RY: [A]s for the environment I suppose a standard thing for listening exercise would be to place it somewhere quiet. But also quite enjoyed [...] the energy of these clashing soundscapes—one composed and one just natural like chit chat, jibber-jabber. [laughs]

RO: I think it's interesting to have something really out of this world as an intermission. [...] I think that we have to desacralize some stuff [...]. [R]ussolo would appreciate that [...] he would not like to have his piece performed in Schoenberg Zaal actually, because he was a futurist and [...] would like to blow [...] this whole building away. He was a sort of a punk—they were proto-punk actually. So, [...] I think he would enjoy to have a pub with this noise piece. [...] Oliveros [...] liked deep listening so maybe she would like to have a devoted audience [...] or something like that. But [...] in order to build a devoted audience [...] you have to start from somewhere and you can start like this—. [...] I think it's a great challenge [...] now to try to [...] start with an uninformed [...] audience, magmating the informed audience and [...] make them listen just one minute to something [...].

A Critical Reflection of the *Sound House* and WORM

WORM made a deep impression on all participants. The following aspects have been of chief interest to them; organization, atmosphere and attitude. Focusing on first impressions, the overall response was very positive. “T: [I]t had a professional feel to it. And, even thought I was early was already a welcome feeling”. The setup was done nicely, with benches to sit across the stage and space to stand. It was not that crowded at first, but busy enough to draw attention. The audience was relaxed and concentrated. “E: I thought it was very inviting to come and sit there instead of [...] Wunderbar [...]”. Also, among the newcomers, WORM stood out for its unique interior. The toilets, rolling tables, audiovisual installation (the Display) at the foyer and the chair with two tubas at the nearby bar, were the most mentioned items:

RY: I really like [...] the style, [...] the way they're doing it. Is really interesting [...]

> place to be. Everything you look at is slightly unusual, [...] I appreciate that. I kind of approach my home in that way, [...] take normal things and trying to think about how they could be different—more interesting. And I think Worm is doing that all the time [...]. I remember being surprised that that performance space was right there 'cause when I went before [...] it was really quiet and we were sat kind of where that was. Um, that's another really nice aspect of the venue—the way everything rolls around. So [...] was cool to see the stage [...] being opened up right in the middle of everything.
>
> RI: I liked [...] the quirkiness of it all [...] the weird [...] pink things, which is now my profile picture on Facebook. You know, those little beds, those little spaces to relax. That's really nice idea [...] really fun. I watched that really weird [...] 1950s soft porn kind of dystopian film—that [...] Sins of the Fleshapoids. Hilarious.

Interestingly, Gania whose objections about the staging have already been mentioned, was very enthusiastic about the vibe of WORM. It brought a sense of exploration, which was a perfect state for listening to music:

> G: I was very happy to [...] know this place 'cause [...] it has [...] very good vibes [...]. [I] took a lot of pictures [...] so it means something. [...] It reminded me home [...]. 'Cause in Israel—in Jerusalem especially—we have a lot of [...] small places that from the outside look [...] normal and then you get inside and suddenly you get a feeling of something very unique. I was really impressed [...] I love this place [...]. And probably I will go [...] back. [...] [I]t could be a case that I would go [to] some kind of equivalent event and I wouldn't enjoy. [...] [I]t's always the environment—it's very connected to an environment and I felt [...] the environment in WORM is [...] good for observation [...].

Also participants were asked whether they had enjoyed the concept and programme of the *Sound House*. Everyone, without fail, was very satisfied with the programme. "T: [I] liked the diversity [...]. And that makes actually extra necessary to have these simple intermissions". Further, the order in which the acts appeared worked well for the venue; "RY: A pretty simplistic way to look at it would be like drinking patterns so [...] the first [...] was [...] a concentration thing [...] and then the last [...] was [...] quite light and funny [...]". It also worked with the rest of the programming in the evening; Mirrors for Psychic Warfare (US) + Sanford Parker (US), 20:30 in the main stage and Noodlebar at 21:30 at the foyer.

> E: [T]he upstairs programming [...] Psychic Warfare was also [...] the mixing *paneel*[16] and they were making [...] experimental noises but then [...] the guitarist from the Roses [...] was playing some really good doomy guitar over top of that. [...] There was like a theme in Worm that evening [...]. [I]t was very nice that there was a connection [...] kind of brings the evening to one thing [...].

The last part of the interview encouraged respondents to put themselves in the curator's shoes and suggest improvements or things they would have done differently. This

16 panel

section was very rich in input, hence it was decided to present the statements per participant.

Emma had no issues with the place of the show; another interesting space would be an art gallery, to have the performances in between art (like WORM's Slash Gallery). She would have liked a short introduction between all the acts.

Richard pictured a space big enough that also feels intimate, because "that kind of music [...] works in an intimate setting" with optional sitting and a bar. He thought WORM or similar spaces worked well in these terms.

Tim had no issues with the staging or place, except for the fact that the bar was on the side because "people get drunk and tend to get loud".

Ryan turned back this question to me. "I had a really good time and I think there are things that worked for me at the time that maybe didn't work for you". He said it was very rare to see this kind of music being presented in a looser way:

> RY: [T]hat's actually something I liked about the event on the whole—was very casual. A lot of [...] experimental shows I've been to here feel really rigid and that stresses me out. There's [...] one place in the Hague [...] that we go quite a lot cause a lot of shows related to our course are there but it's always with [...] chairs and introductions and official interludes—it's like pff. [...] [I]t's fine, it has its place but [...] I enjoyed being at Worm this time because it was much more relaxed and [...] you could talk and [...] move away around the room [...].

On the other hand, he thought that the particular mixed space needs a special treatment so the bar clientele does not dominate the audience of the show:

> RY: I thought the space was really good. Maybe the only thing that would be worth thinking about—which might not be possible in that kind of venue—um, for this kind of stuff [...] it could possibly work better if people attending the venue are more [...] into it [laughs] in general. I think there's a lot of people who just like that bar [...] or go there regardless. And on one hand that's really good cause you get people seeing and hearing stuff that they don't know about. But um, there was [...] a large portion of the crowd that couldn't care less about all this fascinating stuff that was happening [...] which is fine but [...] it's annoying when there's really no regard for the performance—like someone [...] being [...] loud and annoying [...]. There were a couple of moments [...] but generally it was ok.

Roberto was very supportive of the choice to organize experimental music events in alternative spaces. Two points that he cautioned about was that musicians are on board and the repertoire is not extremely quiet. This choice poses challenges but it can also bring a wider and different audience. "[T]his music is not so strange [...] experimental can be enjoyed also by other people. We have to fight against prejudice [...] barriers [...] and [...] the fact that we think that information is flowing a lot". He finds the current

conditions very problematic. From his experience, concerts in spaces like Studio LOOS, Music in Transition, or the Schoenberg Zaal of the Royal Conservatoire in the Hague are followed by a small number (around twenty) of specific people. Also, one should not rely for the promotion of these events on social media because, “if you are friend of someone sharing this event on Facebook, you get it [...] maybe when we used flyers [...] years ago [...] had a wider diffusion of [...] events”. He had the impression that the place where the stage was, was the best one, unless it was possible to have it a bit further from the bar. Another thing he suggested was to serve drinks only during the intermissions.

Phillip was annoyed by the audience and regretted that the performances were so close to the bar. He did not mind the bar as a choice of venue, but would have placed the show in an isolated and quieter part of it. It did not need to be a big room, but one that “upon entering people feel they must not speak”. He would still choose an informal presentation, for example having the freedom to come and go or lie down.

Gania mentioned that the *Sound House* event was a success and should continue happening in the future; just in a place that is more comfortable for the audience. Despite liking WORM, she could see that the foyer had certain limitations. “I'm not sure this is the best place for shows but [...] if it is [...] maybe just switch [...] the mixer [...] and [...] the screen [...]”. If the most important consideration is the performance, in the FIQ case she would opt for a big room, with a prominent screen and the musicians underneath or nearby. WORM and similar venues would work well for what she called “a cool event of noise”.

Feedback Form

Talking about the issue of the feedback forms it can be seen that two (P, E) of the seven participants noted down their impressions while listening. From the rest, three were not aware of it as they missed the programme and two chose to skip it. Retrospectively, three out of five were not against the idea, but all agreed that the timing was not right. They were already enjoying the performances and answering the question would be distracting; especially since “experimental music is quite demanding for itself” as Roberto said. Indeed, part of Phillip's feedback was written a bit further from the performance space as he tried to find more light to be able to write down. Moreover, part of the reason why the two participants skipped the activity was that the blank page

overwhelmed them. Gania had questions about “who is going to read it [...] and in which level of communication I need to answer” and Ryan could not put his thoughts into words; “I'm sure there are a lot more people who would have something to say but can't necessarily put it on paper at the time”. He suggested that a questionnaire would probably collect more data. “[S]omething a bit more concise, [...] simple, for idiots, like a couple of tick boxes, maybe something smaller with [...] easy dumb questions for [...] people who are drinking”.

Chapter V - Conclusion

The current project led to a number of findings regarding the many facets of audience interpretation of a music concert in an alternative, multi-purpose venue. The focus of this study has been on how live experimental electronic music functions in those spaces. We saw this by exploring how the venue as a social and physical space affects musicians and how the public perceives this kind of music in that kind of venue.

Taking into consideration the perspectives presented in the second part of the second chapter (Logan, 2010; Small, 1998, 1999; Commander, 2013; Robinson, 2013) we see that our results have a number of similarities with the literature in terms of artist – audience and artist – venue relationships. Given the features of the acts, the venue's influence on the performers has been demonstrated in the following: in the first case (FIQ-improv/video), the musicians felt comfortable and supported from the set-up and character of the venue. Similarly, in the second case (Fani Konstantinidou-live electronics), the musician enjoyed the set-up as it de-emphasized her presence, while on the contrary, in the last case (Jaap Blonk-audiovisual), the situation felt bellow the performer's standards.[17] Furthermore, both the FIQ and Fani successfully overcame certain technical limitations with the help of amplification and adjustment in dynamics and musical material. For Jaap, the busy atmosphere led him give a more dramatic performance to catch the attention of the audience. A shared benefit mentioned by the first two acts was that the particular venue offered them a way out of the academia.

Taking now the perspective of the participants into account, the character of the venue did not seem to limit the acts in any way. For example, in the third case, even though Jaap experienced a tough situation trying to come across a noisy space, the participants highlighted his skillfulness in winning their attention. In the case of the Open Listening Foyer (in-between pieces), the majority approved of the curator's initiative, while only a few found the selection too demanding for the break time. The venue acted more as an “open frame” for the practice and the interpretations. Details that could be considered bothering were transformed into parts of the experience, e.g.,

17 It is worth mentioning that Fani and Jaap differ in terms of performance intentions. Fani believed that de-emphasizing her presence would amplify the effect of her music, while Jaap thought that the minimum requirement for his works was sufficient visibility and audibility. Possibly the difference comes down to the style of music, the performers' expectations of their work (Fani being interested in the perception of the listener) and apprehension of the venue/programme one is playing at.

the improvisation-chit-chat combination coming across as an “urban soundtrack”, or the film on the side emphasizing the dialogue with the improvisation. This was a consequence of the venue's relaxed atmosphere and the collage-like aesthetic of WORM's interior design, as well as the performative rigor of the musicians and the open attitude of the interviewed audience. On the contrary, seeing that the second act was the one that most people skipped despite the positive feedback on the music, it can be concluded that its “traditional live-electronics setup” in this informal situation was conflicting; it brought an emphasis on sound, along with confusion, frustration or indifference.

In line with the theoretical framework, informal contexts proved to have certain space and technical limitations. Also the existence of a bar clientele is at times a drawback. This type of venue seems to do a number of things; the fact that the movie in act A was hardly visible is forgiven due to the informal venue, but informality can also become too dominant, as when Fani is not noticed enough or Jaap needs to put in extra effort. So performing requires quite some confidence and skills to keep the audience attentive. However, the informal context also allows for experimental music to be presented in alternative ways, de-academized, blur the edges of genres (“jazz”, parallel show upstairs), of audience and performer, and reach a different audience. An interesting example was Jaap's version of the piece 4'33", where the noisy venue, in combination with the visual elements of his silent performance, gave a different dimension to the work. Plus, the cosy, familiar and affordable space alleviates the sense of risk for the audience. Furthermore, similar curations in venues like WORM provide a sense of ownership as stimuli and information are dispersed in space, waiting to be found by the curious senses ad libitum without anything imposed in an intrusive way.

Concluding, there is satisfactory agreement between the theoretical expectations and the conclusions. More details on this will be given below in brief. This study has engaged with a variety of approaches of audiovisual interactions which exhibited a spectrum of abstraction. Reflecting on the responses to the three works, they have indicated that such performances are not by default less interesting or difficult, because the context[18] in which these are found is a more important element in audience

18 “Context upon a number of structural levels: context of objects within structures, context of structures within discourses, context of discourses within schemata, context of works within lived experience and context of works within and the situation in which they are presented” (Hill, 2013, p. 292).

appreciation. In that sense, Schaeffer's (as cited in Chion, 2009) overview of the ways a person can perceive sonic material can be a great tool for listeners, but one that composers should not assume as a priori known to the audience.[19] Also, the responses showed the effect of experience (knowledge, training and lived experience) on interpretation, but with an overall positive engagement pattern by people of various levels of experience, similar to the I/R project (Weale, 2006). Moreover, audiences preferred their own interpretations over the programme notes, while need for contextual information was more noticeable for the works that the respondents were not able to comprehend (i.e. OLF). In regards to the most appropriate content of information, the findings suggested that it should provide the framework of the art form and specific context of the art work.[20] Furthermore, in line with the third expectation, the audiovisual and performative aspect contributed to increased engagement, as in the cases of FIQ and Jaap, while the absence of these features can be considered to have had the opposite effect[21]. Fani's (laptop) intention for a listening experience can be assumed to have worked better in a structured environment where the public's attention would mainly focus on the acts.[22] Likewise, the sound works of the OLF possessed interpretative obstacles due to them being acousmatic, technical and not properly introduced.[23]

Finally, it is important to mention that this venture inevitably has had limitations in the scale of its research, in particular the limited number of both performers and audience members, as well as the fact that only one venue was explored. It would be useful to repeat the session in different spaces, within or outside of WORM, as well as to continue the research with a broader range of performances/projects. That would help

19 Works based on particular ideas-codes, i.e. reduced listening, should be properly introduced to less experienced audiences. Special care should be given when working with mimetic materials because "[w]hen mimetic associations are consciously stimulated, and are contradictory to their context, they have the potential to break engagement" (Hill, 2013, p.145).

20 In the I/R project information was provided with the listening (Weale, 2006). In our case access to information was optional (event page) and there were also people familiar with the performers or the venue. Both acted similarly providing a frame of reference and, in our case, incentive for attending. When the respondents were later asked whether they wished they had further information on the evening, it was logical that the issue was no longer important, since they had confidently made their own interpretations. In some cases there was desire for further research on certain pieces and artists.

21 It could be argued that the audiovisual combination has a more common frame of reference than an exclusively sonic work (Hill, 2013, p. 279).

22 Also, we cannot rule out that lack of breaks as well as introductions to the acts may have influenced this outcome.

23 For the OLF#2, two participants (P, G) made reference to a section with loud, aggressive, violent noise. On the contrary, Emma enjoyed it. A point that added to her appreciation was learning that the piece was made in the '60s.

to further explore and try to verify the results, and to provide an ever more varied collection of interpretations of a broader range of experimental music works.

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Appendix A

REFERENCE[24]	GENDER	AGE	NATIONALITY	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION
PHILLIP	M	28	FRENCH	THE NETHERLANDS	MASTER'S DEGREE	EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER SERVICE
EMMA	F	22	DUTCH	THE NETHERLANDS	HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE	HORECA EMPLOYEE
RYAN	M	30	BRITISH	THE NETHERLANDS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	SELF-EMPLOYED, STUDENT
GANIA	F	29	ISRAELI	THE NETHERLANDS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	SELF-EMPLOYED, STUDENT
ROBERTO	M	37	ITALIAN	THE NETHERLANDS	MASTER'S DEGREE	SELF-EMPLOYED, STUDENT
RICHARD	M	23	BRITISH	THE NETHERLANDS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	SELF-EMPLOYED, STUDENT
TIM	M	49	DUTCH	THE NETHERLANDS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	SELF-EMPLOYED, STUDENT

24 Nicknames

Appendix B

Interview Guide – Audience

Motivation

To increase understanding of how experimental music is perceived and experienced in the context of a live performance.

1. Do you have artistic hobbies and/or studies? What is (are) your general musical taste(s)?
2. How did you find out about the event? What was your motivation for attending and expectations?
3. How often do you go to concerts with these types of pieces? In what kind of venues? Do you listen to it at home as well? Do you perhaps give similar concerts?
4. What time did you arrive/leave? Which part of the program did you watch? Briefly outline any movement in space, sitting spot and so on.
5. Had you been to WORM before? If so, for what reason (drinks, performances)?
6. What were your first thoughts/impression when entering the WORM foyer on Friday night?
7. What was your impression of the atmosphere within the audience?
8. Did you use the feedback form? If yes, for which pieces? Did you do it while listening? How did that work? If no, why? Have you ever done that before?

"Lets watch some short video segments to refresh our memory and talk further about each of the three pieces. You may use your initial comments as a memory aid."
(questions 9-18 are asked three times, for work A, B, C)

9. Please share any thoughts, images or ideas that came to mind as you listened.
10. What might this piece be about?
11. What sounds did you notice? Did you find any of them strange, unnatural or unexpected?
12. Did the piece provoke images in your mind?
13. Did the pieces suggest a narrative? If so what might this concern?

14. Did you have any background information on the performance, e.g. the title or the composer's intentions? If yes, how did that work? Was it helpful? If no, would you rather have known?
15. Did the piece seem to convey any emotion(s)? And/or did you have any emotional responses to the piece?
16. What aspects, musical or otherwise, did you find most and least engaging in the piece? Do you think that watching a live performance instead of listening to it at home was an asset?
17. Did the piece make you want to keep listening or was it uninteresting? Why?
18. Now that you have heard the piece, would you choose to listen to a similar type again in the future? At home? Attend a live? Purchase it? If yes, why? If no, why not?
19. How did you find the introductory pieces (Open Listening Foyer) that were placed in between the performances? What did you think of the projected waveform and text?
20. What were your views or feelings on the concept and programming of the night?
21. If you were to curate this event would you change or add anything about the concept and/or programming? In what kind of place would you like for it to take place?
22. Is there anything more you would like to share?

Interview Guide – Artists

1. (for the group) How did you come together? What is that you do?
2. What did you present at the *WPB* S*ound House* event?
3. Could you refer to the sound/visual source(s) and source material of the piece(s)? What was the dynamic between sound and image? Were they equally important for the creation and experience of the piece(s)?
4. Could you describe the creative method/process and any improvisatory elements? Were there different phases of creation? How did you prepare for the night? What exactly did you do on the spot?
5. What are your intentions/aspirations concerning the piece(s)? And, what are you attempting to communicate to the listener? How do you evaluate your performance? What elements make a good one?
6. What methods are you using to communicate these intentions to the listener?
7. Is there a narrative discourse involved? If so, how would you describe this narrative?

ow important is it that this narrative is received and why?
8. Where did the inspiration to create the piece(s) come from?
9. To what extent and how did your initial intention change as the compositional process progressed? What influenced these changes of intention?
10. Is it important to you that your piece(s) is listened to with your intentions in mind and why?
11. Is/are there something(s) in the piece(s) that you want the listener to hold on to in order to make sense of it and why?
12. How did you decide to use the specific title(s) for your piece(s)?
13. How much do you rely on the title as a tool with which to express your intentions and why?
14. Do you rely on any other accompanying text, in the form of programme notes or verbal introduction, to outline your intentions prior to the listener's engagement with the piece(s) and why?
15. Who is your intended audience for the piece(s)?
16. How is your creative process influenced by the audience, if at all?
17. What instruments and/or tools did you use? How important is it that the technical processes involved in the piece(s) are recognised by the listener and why?
18. Do you think that detectable technical processes are an integral aspect of the pieces' overall aesthetic? If yes, why? If no, why?
19. Under what listening conditions is/are your piece(s) intended to be heard and why?
20. Could you reflect on your performance at the *WPB* S*ound House* event? Did you take the specific occassion (venue, other bands, curation, duration, audience) into account, or did it somehow influence your performance?
21. In what ways do you expect the listening experience of the piece(s) to be structured based on the specific setup of the event? How similar was it to the rehearsals?
22. Was there anything in terms of space, production, programming/concept and/or audience of that specific night that you would like to note? Was there perhaps something that bothered you or that did not go as planned?