

## **Glas(s) - Experiences & Practices** [19 Feb 2019]

This file contains additional information for the performance of *Glas(s)*. At this moment the information in the score and parts of *Glas(s)* is only usable for one specific location: the location for the concert on 20/10/2018). Therefore, this document provides additional information on how this specific version was realized. This text is written by Hans Roels. (contact: info ad hansroels dot be)

### **General clarifications**

A performance of *Glass* is highly influenced and characterized by the performance site and preparatory choices (for example, on the trajectory of the percussionist). Thus, a performance at a different place will result in a different performance. At this moment (November 2018) only one version has been made. This version was highly 'composed': the performers - specifically the keyboard and percussion players - had more or less written out parts. I have not decided yet if future versions will be more open and less composed (checking if this is feasible would require one or two days of experimentation with all the performers and the whole technical setup).

I haven't made a 'general' score for *Glass* yet. For the first concert on 20 October 2018, there were individual parts (sometimes without preceding remarks or explanation) for the five players and an overall time scheme to coordinate all parts. This is a short description of the composition: "The audience is seated indoors, in a space with large windows, as an office or bar. In the first performance in Neerpelt (20/10/2018) the audience will be looking at a landscape with a street, a sports ground and trees in silence. When the doors are opened they can hear the outside sounds acoustically. Two performers with microphones are walking outside. Using omnidirectional, directional and close microphone techniques they bring (selections of) outside environmental sounds to the PA speakers in the audience space. Two other musicians are playing percussion and synthesizer, both inside and outside the audience space. Sometimes they are acoustically audible, sometimes amplified through the PA speakers, when the microphone performers pick up their sound."

Not all five performers in *Glass* have the same general sound image of a performance as the audience. Specifically the microphone and percussion performers walk outside the performance space and do not hear the mixture of acoustic, amplified and performed sounds as the audience does. At certain moments these performers may not hear or see the other performers, they may even have their own small audience of accidental people passing by.

### **Performance in Musica (Neerpelt, Belgium) - 20 October 2018**

This performance was part of the Oortreders festival ("Festival for art with sound"), organized by Musica in the village Neerpelt. It took place at 16.00 on a Saturday in the corridor of a sports hall. There were many concerts and installations in this festival which started at midday and continued until midnight, people walked from one performance location to another.

The performers of the ensemble Collectief Publiek Geluid were Eveline Vervliet (keyboard), Vincent Caers (percussion), Sebastian Dinges (microphone performer 1), Michael Van Dijk (microphone performer 2) and Joost Van Duppen (mixer).

The concert location is visible in illustration 1 and 2, the audience was sitting in a wide corridor of a sports hall, looking at a landscape with a street, parking lot, sports field and trees. A short video file (made four months before the performance) shows the view that the audience had through the windows, the video is found at [www.hansroels.be/sporthal-20180614\\_144332-compressed.mp4](http://www.hansroels.be/sporthal-20180614_144332-compressed.mp4)

More info on the exact locations and movements of the performers is visible in the illustrations 3, 4 & 5. In general, the microphone players used fixed positions to record sounds and moved to the next location while their channel on the main mixer was switched off. In the end - at section W - microphone 1 did walk away while his microphone was audible in the audience. The percussion was playing loudly from a visible distant, fixed location. Thus, by walking away, the microphone player created a fade-out of the percussion sounds (while he was still visibly playing loud).

Just before the concert I gave a short introduction explaining that the 'accidental' environmental sounds were part of the performance - or vice versa -, that a fitness

centre and indoor sports hall were producing sounds and that two performers were gathering sounds with microphones. I also showed where the fixed (AKG C414) microphones was located.

The scores and parts of *Glass* for the performance of 20/10/2018 are bundled in the file [www.hansroels.be/Glas-allscores-musica-20oct18.zip](http://www.hansroels.be/Glas-allscores-musica-20oct18.zip) The score (file: *Glas-score-musica-20oct18.pdf*, first page titled 'AANPASSING SEPT') is basically a time scheme showing the sections where music instruments are performing or the microphone performers are audible (through the speakers) in the audience location. The score looks like a sketch or draft, it is an adaptation of an earlier version for the rehearsal. The only purpose of this score was to create an overview of the performance for the rehearsals. There are two horizontal systems per page (each with a duration of 1'30'). Underneath the horizontal lines of each system there are text remarks and a classic music staff: these give an abbreviated overview of the percussion and keyboard part. The performance starts at 2'00'' to give the performers the time to walk to their start location after starting a chronometer or 'click track' together. There are also separate parts:

- the percussion part: *percussion-glas-3b.pdf*
- the keyboard part: *keyboard-glas-5.pdf*
- the parts for the two microphone performers: *glas-partij-micros-3.pdf*
- the part for the performer at the mixing desk: *glas-mixer-scan-25sept18.pdf*



*Illustration 1: Aerial view of the performance site*

Seven microphones were used to pick up environmental sounds, these microphones were connected to the mixing desk at the audience location. The mixer performer was playing on this mixer and sending the audio from these microphones to a set of 6 speakers positioned around the audience. These are the microphones that were used:

- two DPA 4060 microphones (connected to two wireless senders and receivers),

- carried around by the performer 'microphone 1', used for the outdoor locations;
- two Rode NT5 microphones (connected to two wireless senders and receivers), carried around by the performer 'microphone 2', used for the indoor locations in the first half of the performance;
- one wireless Shure SM57 microphone, used by performer 'microphone 2' to pick up the sound of the performing percussion player in the second half of the performance;
- a stereo couple of AKG C414 microphones, located outside (on the east side of the audience location) and connected to the mixing desk with long XLR cables; these microphones had a fixed, static position.

The position of the speakers reflected the spatialization of the acoustic and amplified environmental sounds, as seen in illustration 6. For example, this illustration shows the fixed stereo microphones, on the east side (outside of the audience corridor). The sounds from these microphones were played back inside the audience location through 2 speakers (C & D) positioned at the east side of the concert location (the corridor). This was the *basic* plan for the spatialisation: from the third rehearsal on more variation and details were added, for example the stereo microphones from microphone player 1 were also played (softly) through speakers C & D to create a more realistic sound.



*Illustration 2: The audience location inside the corridor of the sports hall*

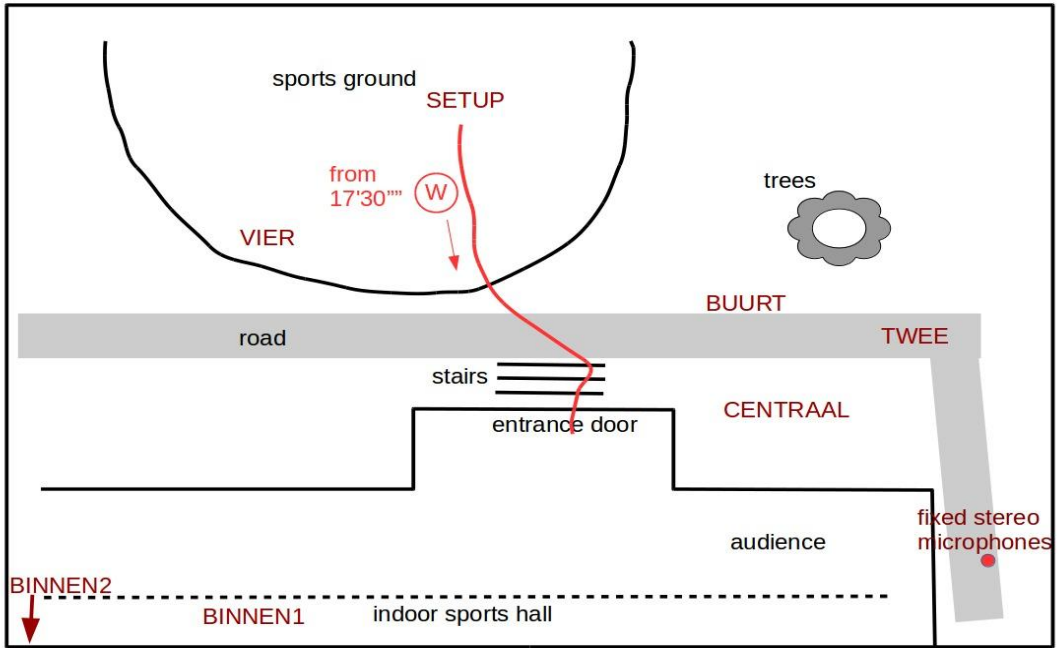


Illustration 3: Map of the performance site: locations of microphone players marked in red

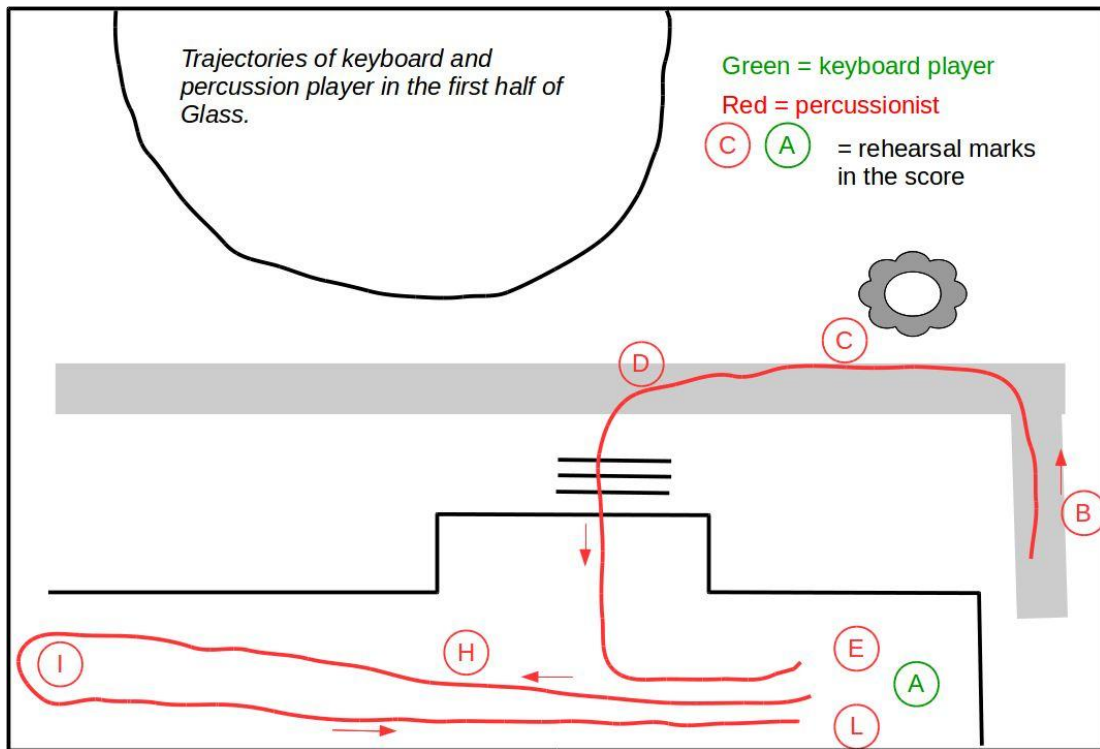


Illustration 4

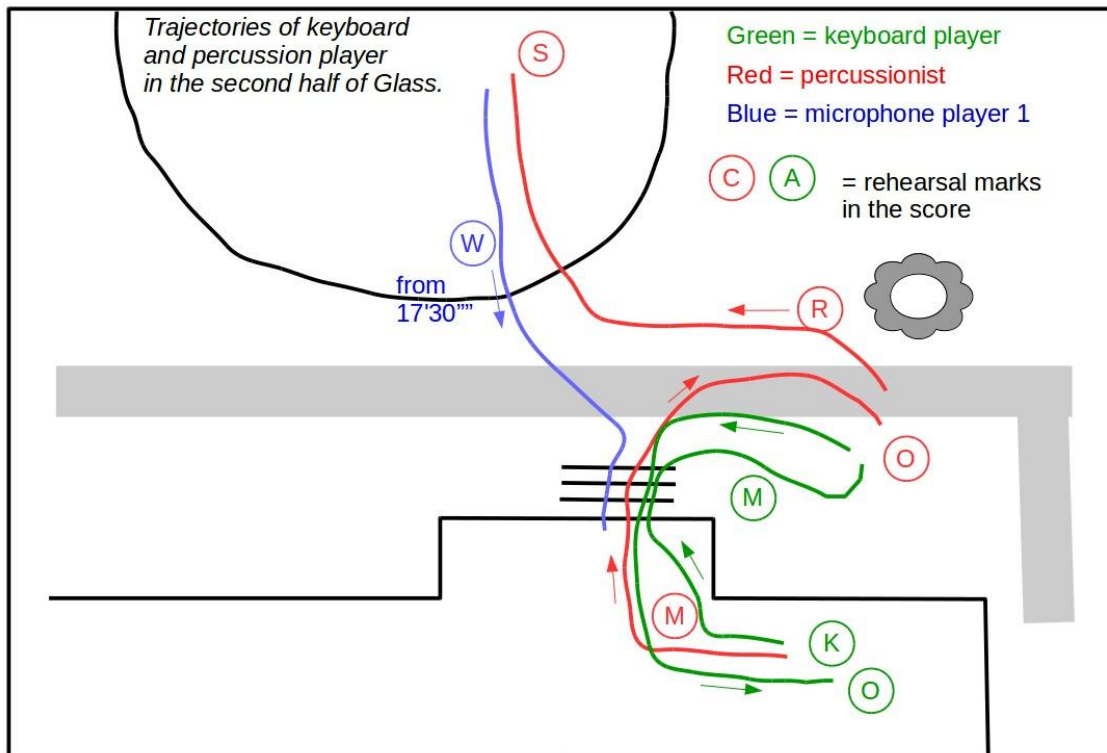


Illustration 5

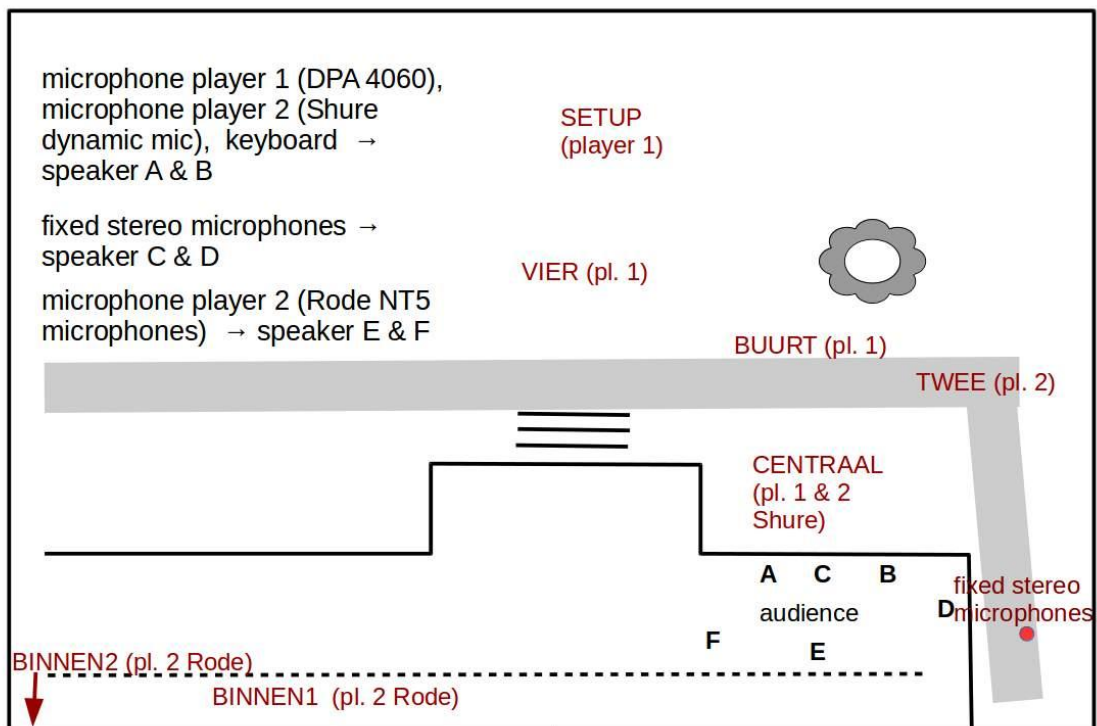


Illustration 6: Basic spatialisation plan for the performance on 20 October 2018

A live audio recording was made with two Classic MkII omni microphones (made by Johan Vandermaelen) in the audience location. This microphone was behind the audience and very near to the door of the indoor sports hall (around the rehearsal mark L on illustration 4). The sport sounds are leaking into the recording, they are louder than heard by a large part of the audience. I added some compression to the live recording because the difference in loudness between the loud sections (keyboard, percussion) and the environmental sounds (acoustic or amplified) was very large in the concert. There are serious limitations to the audio recording as documentation: the recording can not make a distinction between the acoustic sound and the amplified/recorded sound picked up by the microphone performers and played back through speakers in the audience space. Moreover, performance was audiovisual. But you can find this recording at:

[www.hansroels.be/Glas-perf20oct18-musica-compressed-manually.flac](http://www.hansroels.be/Glas-perf20oct18-musica-compressed-manually.flac)

Kim Vreys made video recordings at the Oortreders festival, he also filmed the performance of *Glass* but he did this with the intention to cut out fragments and make one overall video about the festival. Thus, the camera is moving a lot in the video. I replaced the sound recording (of the video camera) with my audio recording (.flac file). This is the (large) video file:

[www.hansroels.be/glas-video-gemonteerd-ik-2.mp4](http://www.hansroels.be/glas-video-gemonteerd-ik-2.mp4)

## Exploration and rehearsals

Six and four months before the performance I visited the concert location twice - together with the concert organizers of Musica - to find the best place for the performance and the audience. Of course, the size of the windows and the sight that the audience would have, were very important in making a choice. I also paid attention to the different spots at and around the performance place and their diverse soundscapes. Once we had decided on the exact concert location, I made a rough estimate of the distances between these different spots to have an idea of the time it takes - for the percussion and microphone performers - to move from one spot to another.

The first rehearsal took place on the first of September 2018. A few weeks before this date I visited the concert site together with the percussion player Vincent Caers to test the (timing and distances of the) trajectory of the percussion part and find a suitable setup/instrumentation of 'glissando' instruments.

At the first rehearsal the percussion, keyboard and mixer part were more or less the same as in the concert of the 20<sup>th</sup> October but the role of the microphone performer was different in this first rehearsal:

- microphone performer 1 had 1 (mono) DPA 4060 microphone, directly connected to the wireless sender (without headphone) and thus, could not hear what his microphone was recording;
- microphone performer 2 had another (mono) DPA 4060 microphone, directly connected to a wireless sender (without headphone) and also could not hear what his microphone was recording;
- there were five microphones at a fixed position (2 stereo condenser sets at one indoor and one outdoor location for the environmental sounds and one dynamic microphone to amplify the percussionist playing outside).

Performing with a microphone, looking for interesting spots and soundscapes and avoiding residual sounds (hitting something with the microphone, bad wiring, the body sounds and movements of the performer, etc.), proved to be difficult and uncomfortable for the microphone performers if they couldn't hear their own microphone. Therefore, after the first rehearsal I changed the setup and this turned out to be a good idea. Microphone performer 1 was now carrying a stereo set of DPA 4060 microphones (a stereo sound through the speakers is richer than two mono - environmental - sounds by two performers), these microphones were connected to a portable, battery-powered mixing table with phantom power, the outputs were going to two wireless senders. Moreover, the portable mixers also had a headphone output to ensure that the performer heard his microphones. The setup with portable mixer, headphones, wireless senders and cables was put in a laptop bag. Microphone performer 2 was using a similar setup as performer 1 (portable mixer, headphone, wireless senders, etc.) in the first half of the performance. He was performing indoors and had a different set of microphones (Rode NT5) than performer 1. In the second half he used the (wireless) dynamic microphone to 'follow' the percussion player and pick up the performed music of the percussionist. In fact, I replaced most of the fixed microphones (from the first rehearsal) by performer 2 carrying these microphones. This was visually and performance-wise more interesting.

The audience could see performer 2 stepping into the indoor sports hall and later on heard sounds from people playing sports in this hall. In the first rehearsal the fixed microphones in this hall were not visible.

Before each rehearsal (and the performance) it turned out to be necessary to test the range of the wireless systems because this fluctuated a lot. Even in the performance of 20 October there were still moments when the wireless systems created audio distortions (for example, the low cracks at 13:47 and 13:49 in the performance recording). Because of the technical problems (with the wireless systems and overall technical setup) and the large distances between the performers, a lot of rehearsal time was spent on organizational matters and bringing the performers together to discuss and evaluate the performance. Therefore it was important (after rehearsal 2) to rethink the organization of the rehearsals, search for efficient rehearsal methods and not always play the piece from start to end with the chronometers. For example, the end section W could be practised without chronometer (starting at the visual cue of the percussionist around 16'55'') in the score, section O could be practised with the musicians (microphone 1 was not necessary) almost in - or very near to - the audience location, etc.