No Room - Experiences & Practices [23 Feb 2018]

This file contains additional information for the performance of *No Room*. The text score contains the essential information to perform this work. Feel free to ignore, re-use or get inspired by this additional information.
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General clarifications

The performers are playing outside the concert space in *No Room*. They are not only separated from the audience and hear the performed sounds differently from the audience, they also (probably) don't hear or see the other performers. Therefore, finding a synchronisation system – to perform the trigger idea in the score – is a real challenge. One possible way is to use the set-up of the 8 Dec 2018 performance: the performer in the concert space who switched the live environmental sounds on and off, also had a (FM) wireless system. This consisted of a microphone sending sound to the earphones of the performers. The performer in the concert space 'imitated' the audible sounds (produced by all the outside performers) by ticking (short sounds) or rubbing (sustained sounds) on the wind cap of the microphone. So these ticking and rubbing sounds were inaudible for the audience but through their earphone the performers heard the other performers playing short or sustained sounds. Next, they could choose to use their own or other performers' sounds as a trigger. This synchronisation system is not evident – because the exact timing of each performer's part and sounds is unpredictable and improvised – but it worked well for the performers outside the concert hall.

The main text score of *No Room* mentions *minimum two performers* but – because the two performers are mainly outside the concert space – probably three performers will be necessary: first, to rehearse you need to have someone inside the hall that can listen to what the performers are doing and coordinate the performance; second, to switch the live environmental sounds ((e) in the score) on and off, you will probably need a third performer. [Perhaps it is also possible to automatize these environmental sounds in a Pd, Supercollider or Max/MSP patch...]

A performance of *No Room* has a sparse, remote quality. It is crucial that each sound event has a distinct character. Consider – as an exercise – a moving sound event ((c) in the main score) with a spatial trajectory of 25 meters, performed by beating with a rubber hammer on a wall: this can be performed with a duration of 1'30'' at a moderate, rhythmical speed with many spatial steps in between. One can also perform this in 1'00'' with a very slow rhythm – one beat every 6 or 8 seconds – two or three meters apart from each other. One can also perform the 25 meters at a fast rhythmic speed in 15'' or less by running or dividing the 25 meters into short, successive trajectories for 2 or more performers.

Performance in the concert hall Miry (Ghent, School of Arts) – 8 December 2017

The performers playing on adjacent rooms and spaces, were Ruben Martinez Orio and Primoz Sukic (duo *the Third Guy*), I was mixing the live environmental sounds inside the concert hall where the audience was seated. These environmental sounds came from a DPA 4060 microphone, recording the street sounds (from the first floor) at the entrance door of the School of Arts in the Hoogpoort street.
No Room was the first piece in the concert program. The live environmental sounds from the street were already audible when the audience entered the hall (before the concert started). After a short crescendo these sounds – and the lights – faded out and the performance started.

A live audio recording was made with two Schoeps MK-5 omni microphones in the middle of the hall. You can find this recording here:
www.hansroels.be/noroom-thirdguy-8dec17-geknipt-en-snel-amplified-171208210943.wav
The recording starts with the fade-out of the environmental sounds. The recording is almost unedited, I just amplified the overall sound level.

These were the places around the Miry concert hall that were used in the performance:
(1) Ruben was playing under the (wooden) stage (illustration 1)

(2) and in the corridor around the concert hall (on the same floor as the hall) (illustration 2)
(3) Primoz was playing on top of the concert hall (in the attic, illustration 4),
(4) in the corridor at the back of the hall (one floor higher than the concert hall) (behind the upper doors in illustration 3)
(5) and in the old library (behind the side wall of the hall, one floor higher than the concert hall, behind the paintings on the left in Illustration 1).

The stairs leading to the attic were steep and because of pipes and girders it was impossible and unsafe to use the whole attic.

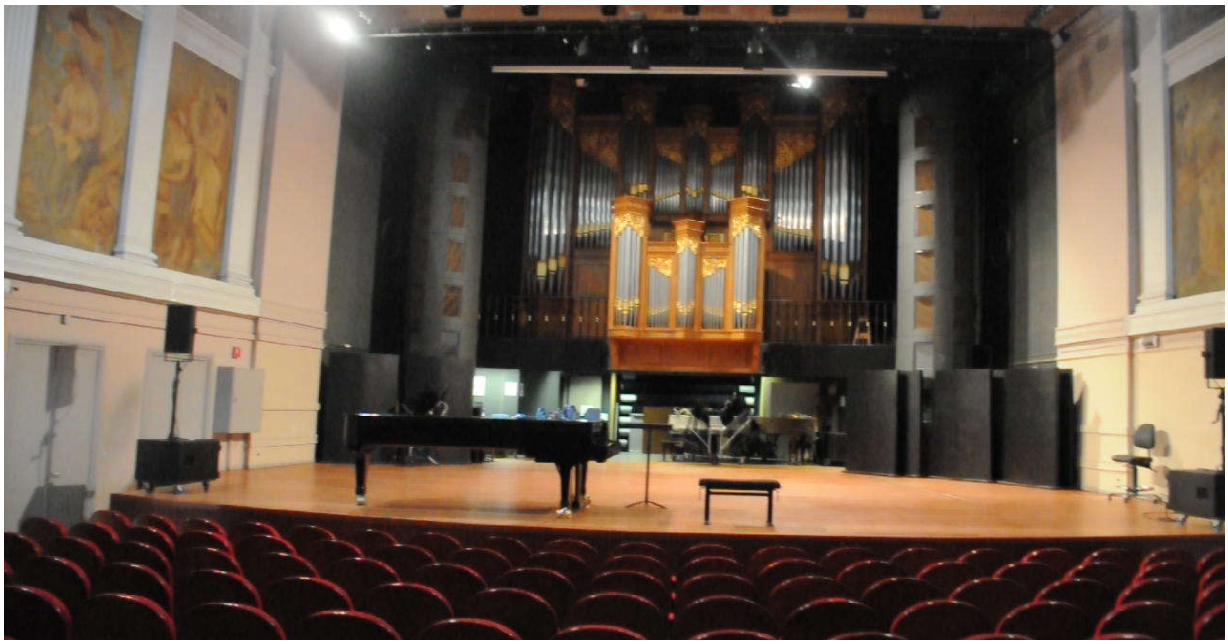

Illustration 1: Inside view of the Miry hall, with the stage in the front

The two performers played on the following architectural 'elements', leading the performed sounds into the concert hall: walls, doors (door handle, keyhole, hinges), floors, wooden panels, stairs, girders, small windows of the (audio and lightning) control room, three separate water pipes (leading to fire extinguishers inside the hall) and large pipes (leading to the heating and ventilation system).

Illustration 2: Side view of the hall with the doors to the corridor where Ruben Orio was performing

The performers were invisible for the audience except when Primoz was playing on the (outside of the) windows of the control room.

Several mallets, sticks and other materials were used to beat, strike or rub on the walls, pipes, etc.: friction mallets, tennis ball (= easy to reach and hit higher parts of a wall), football, petanque ball, table tennisball, percussion mallets, wooden and metal sticks, rubber hammers (to beat on the walls), (scrub and hair) brushes, a trolley (to move on the floor), etc.

Illustration 3: The back side of the concert hall with doors on the same and a higher floor leading to corridors

Exploration and rehearsals

This performance of *No Room* was arranged in a limited amount of time, starting just a few weeks before the concert. Initially, I though I didn't have any recent compositions that could be performed in a concert hall. The performers and me decided to take the risk and together arrange the performance of *No Room* in a limited amount of time because we had already worked together for other concerts.

A few weeks in advance I explored the concert hall twice together with a person who is responsible for the building and infrastructure. He showed me all the spaces and corridors around, up and under the hall. We tested which (outside) parts of the hall were audible (inside) the hall and which pipes and ventilation systems lead to the concert hall. We also checked more practical stuff (how safe some spaces were, how often they were used/frequented by other people, etc.).

I had sent the performers the (text) score of *No Room* 8 days before the concert (the score at that moment was: www.hansroels.be/no-room-2-p1.pdf). There were two rehearsals and in between, some extra (rehearsal) time with one performer.

Because of the limited time to prepare the performance, I had divided the possible spaces (outside the concert hall) in advance: Ruben was playing on the same floor as the hall, Primoz one floor higher and on the attic. I left out some additional spaces (behind the stage and one floor lower than the concert hall) because it took too much time – for two performers in one performance – to move from these spaces to the same floor and the floor higher than the concert hall.

During the rehearsals we discovered that some sounds produced by spatially moving the sound outside the hall, were audible as a (moving) sound trajectory inside the concert hall, but others were not. For example, a performer moving 10 meters while beating on a wall, did not necessarily produce a moving sound in the hall (perhaps because of the

specific architecture of the building). Thus, we could only rely on experimenting and trying out different sound trajectories and finding (by listening in the hall) the most effective 'moving' sounds.
In the rehearsals a lot of time was lost on practical matters such as: placing sticks and mallets along the trajectory of the performers, getting to know the terrain, shouting/phoning/walking back to the players in the hall, etc.

Illustration 4: The attic above the concert hall

I had made two sketchy scores before the rehearsals (one example in illustration 5). They were meant as an individual exercise to prepare the rehearsals, they represent the sound of a possible, imaginary performance. These sketches showed me 'in detail' how we could realize a performance of *No Room* in the right atmosphere. I showed the sketches to the performers in the first rehearsal but we did not use the sketches as scores. More importantly, I discussed the following conclusions - derived from these sketches - with the performers during the rehearsals:

- sections (groupings of sound events) have different durations (between 15 seconds and 3 minutes)
- each section of an individual performer has a substantial amount of silence
- most sections of an individual performer are based on one type of sound event
- the 'short' (and short 'repetitive') sound events occur most frequently, they can also be produced at most locations
- only the 'short' event can be combined simultaneously with another event (by one and the same player); don't combine 'unmusical' actions with the other musical events (a) to (d).

[A short explanation about the two sketches:

- Each system stands for two minutes, there are 5 systems (separated by a red horizontal line). Each system has two lines with symbols for two performers.
- The different graphical symbols stand for the sounds events (a) to (e) mentioned in the main text score; for example an X is a short sound, 'rep' a repetitive sound, a block a sustained sound, the line with arrow a moving sound and the ∞ an action.]

In the first rehearsal I explained the text score and general idea of the composition, we explored the terrain and spaces for each performer, tried out different sounds with sticks, mallets and other materials. In the second rehearsal we performed a run-through and rehearsed per (sound) event. This last practice proved to be the most effective.

While the two performers were in their 'outside' spaces, I was in the concert hall. Each performer tried out a number of sustained sounds (in the different locations of his 'performance space') while I listened in the hall to evaluate if they were audible and effective. Thus, we made a selection of possible sustained sounds for the performance. Next, we repeated this procedure for the 'moving', 'short', 'repetitive' sound events and the actions.

The synchronisation system (as described in the paragraph 'General clarifications') was developed during these rehearsals.

Evaluation

In general, the performers and the audience reacted well to the performance. The timing with many silences worked well and created a special atmosphere as if something was going on outside the hall while being felt inside the hall.

With more preparation time the sound events could perhaps have got an even clearer and more distinct character (specifically the 'moving' and 'repetitive' sound events). In a future performance I would also pay more attention to the creation of a simple form by structuring one or two types of sound events. In the concert the structure of the performance was based on the trajectory of the two performers, specifically Primoz who was moving from the attic to the lower floor.

The spatialisation of the sounds (in the hall) worked very well, as people remarked after the concert, the sounds were coming from different directions.

The performance was also physically demanding for the two performers: crawling underneath the stage, climbing on stairs, etc. while performing or moving to the next performance space.

Illustration 5: sketch to prepare the rehearsals