POSTPRODUCTIONS

concert for three performers, video, laptops, various microphones, instruments and objects + clandestine libretto

concept & realisation	Raphaël Belfiore
performance	Benjamin Jaton (e-bass, electronics and objects), Killian Perret-Gentil (e-guitar, electronics and objects) Raphaël Belfiore (electronics and objects)
embedded works from:	Peter Ablinger / Vito Acconci / G. Douglas Barrett / Robert Bozzi / George Brecht / John Cage / Budhaditya Chattopadhyay / Nicolas Collins / Berhard Garnicnig / Scott Fitzgerald / Takehisa Kosugi / Christine Kozlov / Johannes Kreidler / Isaac Linder / Filippo Tommaso Marinetti / Richard Maxfield / Igal Nassima / Bruce Nauman / Non-Cochlear Posting / Tobias Reber / Terry Riley / Sean Smith / The Institute Of ACES / Michael Trommer / Ben Vautier / Michael Winter

2020-21, an IGNM Zürich production

This libretto / documentation can be taken away after the concert. Returning it or leaving it in the hall is not necessary.
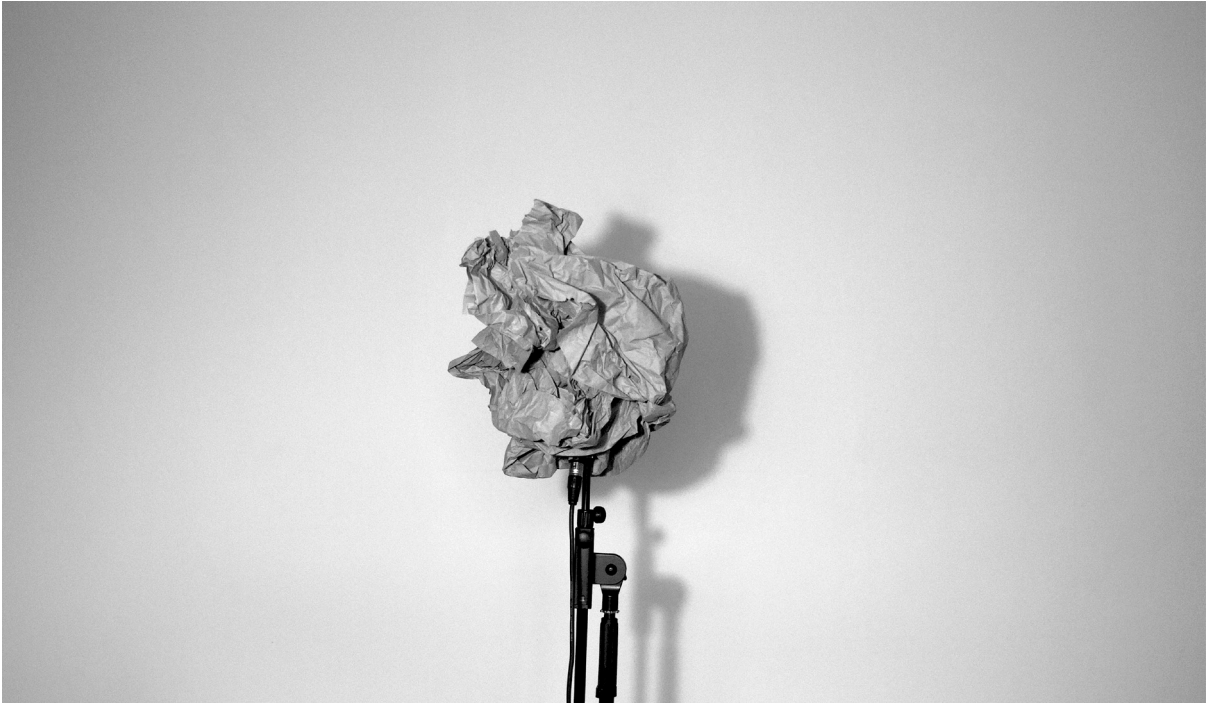
introductory remarks

Postproductions is a "performative situation" conceived as both a concert and a proper musical work. Following the instructions of a "composer-curator", three participants present exclusively pieces borrowed from other composers, visual artists or authors. The works mobilized for the occasion share two characteristics: they are all text-based and involve at some level the use, or rather the misuse, of techniques and technologies of conservation, transmission and reproduction of sound. This triad of terms, synonymous with documentation or more generally with the mediation of perceptual experiences, is also the basis of the organization of the work. Verbal scores exist as part of the situation in three distinct forms: as such, *i.e.* as descriptive and or prescriptive text of a sequence of actions, as the actual, integral and valid actualization of them and, finally, as documentation of their earlier occurrences.

The performance is accompanied by a "libretto" including this presentation essay, the totality of the verbal scores played, projected or documented as well as a system of cross-references having function of "meta-partition" – verbal too – in which the public can find all the decisions of the "composer-curator" as for the implementation of the pieces and their origin. The listener has therefore, in addition to a diachronic implementation of the works, a synoptic support giving him total access to the contents of the concert.

The title of the project comes from the book *Postproduction* by the French art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud. In it, he describes a set of artistic practices thanks to this audiovisual notion that includes processes such as "*montage, the inclusion of other visual or audio sources, subtitling, voice-overs, and special effects*"[1]. These practices, going beyond the valorisation (ready-made) or devalorisation (situationist detour) of cultural artefacts, imply a reprogramming, a use of the works in new scenarios.

composer-semionaut

These scenarios are "written" by artists who are not at the origin of the materials they mobilize. Bourriaud uses the figures of the DJ and the programmer, both of which emerging with the development of the internet, to make explicit his notion of post-production. The former, unifying found lines of code and the latter programming a personal "set", present as work a configuration of knowledge, an original itinerary through the signs already available in culture. This leads Bourriaud to call these figures as well as the artists "practicing postproduction" semionauts. *Postproductions* (in the plural, *i.e.* the musical work in question here) is such an itinerary.

The idea of "semionautics" has as a corollary that all consumption implies a concomitant production. This one is not however to consider as practiced uniformly

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1   Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p. 13

and in a standardized way. "[Consumption] is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself by its own products, but rather by its modes of use of the products imposed by a dominant economic order."[2] The user always interprets and appropriates the consumed commodity.

This question of usage as interpretation is presented under two aspects in Post-productions. First of all, the "composer-semionaut" is as much a consumer as a producer, *i.e.* as much a listener as a composer. Necessarily reappropriating the material he mobilizes in new narratives, he presents the result of his own consumption. (The idea of curation is then to be taken in a rather broad sense: in spite of presentations as valid as possible of the versions of each work, the situation is not exactly curatorial insofar as their combination benefits less to the presented works and their respective authors than to the "post-producer" who makes use of them.) Secondly, the works presented have been selected because they all involve, as mentioned above, the use or misuse of techniques and technologies for the conservation, transmission and reproduction of sound.

(mis-)user manual

"*To be free is to play against the devices*"[3], said Vilém Flusser about photography. Although more fatalistic than De Certeau regarding the freedom implied by the popular use of cameras, they are both interested in the game that is established between, on the one hand, an object whose manufacture implies a certain number of prescriptions of use and, on the other hand, its user having a certain power of action. For example, for Flusser, the true "photographer" is the one who does not limit himself to reiterate in a redundant way the already realized results of the "program of the apparatus", namely the set of combinations of parameters entering in interaction to produce a photographic result. The informative and thus relevant documentation is the one that uncovers still hidden parts of the program. It then includes a critical and creative aspect.

"*First, one can deceive the machine, however stubborn it may be. Secondly, one can introduce clandestinely into its program human intentions that were not foreseen. Third, one can force the apparatus to produce the unexpected, the improbable, the informative. Fourthly, one can despise the apparatus as well as its productions, and divert its interest from the thing in general to concentrate it on the information.*"[4]

Adapting these considerations to a musical practice, the composer's "play against devices" must be transmissible in order to be re-actualized in performances. Traditional notation as a specialized code is not usable since it is incapable at a fundamental level of representing certain technical processes such as feedback for example.

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2.   Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp.13-14

3.   Vilém Flusser, *Pour une philosophie de la photographie*, p.111 (trans. R.Belfiore)

4.   Ibid.

The use of text is then an alternative to make a subversive musical/artistic use of devices. Several notorious scores by Fluxus artists, John Cage or later Alvin Lucier demonstrate this tendency.

participant-composer

The use of verbal scores, notably by Fluxus artists, also implies a dissolution of the border between the "specialist" artist and the receiver of his work for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the music has as support a generalized medium whose comprehension does not require any study of a specific code. On the other hand, a traditionally culturally peripheral thing, idea or action of everyday life can become a work of art, or at least, something worthy of attention during a performance, the score functioning as its virtual frame. The participant in the concert is thus potentially just as qualified to perform the works as the performer in front of him.

Postproductions does not aim to be a reconstruction of the past era of happenings and Fluxus events, but rather proposes a reactualization of the works according to a completely different context. The use of technology as a way to mediate meanings is now daily and global. Microphones, recorders, cameras, but also editing and audiovisual transformation processes are common practice. The member of the audience is then also a producer of multimedia content (at least in potential) and the composer-semionaut finds in front of him his potential counterpart. In addition to the exclusive use of verbal scores and recording devices, a possible symmetrical relationship between the audience and the concert participants is also found in a more extensive way in *Postproductions*, via a certain form of "interactivity".

On the one hand, the listener has access to all the verbal content of the works presented in any way via the clandestine libretto (named so because of the total disregard to the legal questions that the present approach implies). The public is then able to grasp and reproduce not only the individual works presented in as many variations as desired, but also the complete dramaturgy of the *Postproductions*, whose "meta-score" consists of a system of notes grafted onto the scores used.

On the other hand, the project, although not specific to the site, was thought for the Kunstraum Walcheturm in which an audience would be located. Indeed, the floor is particularly noisy and usually reveals the presence of the public despite its relative inactivity. The choice of certain works was therefore made for pieces that required various types of sound recording of the room's environment at the time of the performance. The sound results of *Postproductions* are therefore deeply influenced by the mere existence of an audience.

Finally, certain scores, presented only in the form of textual "propositions" involve the listener directly as the creator of imaginary performances. One could thus also consider his mind as being part of the media in which the work is manifested.

medial interchangeability

In *Postproductions*, the works are indeed presented not only as performed verbal scores, but also, and interchangeably, in the form of texts and documentations. These three categories of presentation are analogous to the three fundamental modes of knowledge that a listener can have of music: through the direct experience of a performance of it, its recording or its description. Without however being a univocal valorization of the materiality versus the ideality of music, *Postproductions* gathers these three normally disparate modes of existence in a fundamental situation of the musical experience: the concert.

As already pointed out above, it is regarded as a fundamentally participatory situation in which works, performers and an audience interact in a specific way. Listening is then not only an attention to the perceptual content manifested in it, but a form of witnessing whose possibility lies in the fact that reception and production are simultaneous and relatively immediate (in the temporal as well as in the medial sense). In this sense, it is not really the type of musical content that is proposed that counts but rather the fact that they are presented in a unified situation, both spatially and temporally. Performance thus takes precedence over content in the definition of music proposed here.

In *Postproductions*, however, performance is not understood as the pure and simple realization of the instructions contained in a score, but also consists of other forms of implementation. The ritualized and contextualized presentation of a document, making it function as stage music, or the materialization of a text in the form of a booklet or live typing are here the main examples.

closing remarks

More could be said about this work, whose evolution has taken place over two years during which questions about culture, participation and mediation have been particularly relevant. *Postproductions* rejects the obsolescence of the in-person concert without denying the poetic potential made possible by other already long-established forms of transmission, not only on their own but also when combined.

Finally, it is possible to suppose that some will see in this text and perhaps this libretto a kind of unwelcome pedagogy or pedantry in art, an activity that should do without explanations at most. I dare however to hope that others will perceive in the approach presented here as an attempt at maximum transparency as an ethical principle.