

Eintauchen (3min5sec, stereo) Work description

Initial spark

The idea for the audio material first came up when my teacher brought a Superball to our class from a previous lecture. A Superball is a rare type of mallet with a rubber ball end, which is often used by percussionists to create atmospheric sounds. For example by swiping it on a timpani or a tam-tam. The grip of the mallet is quite elastic, which lets it bend relatively good in all directions.

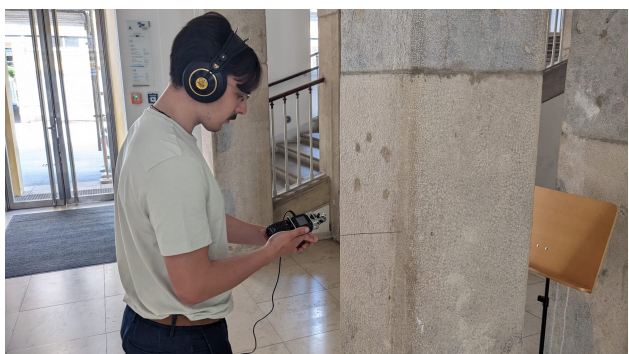
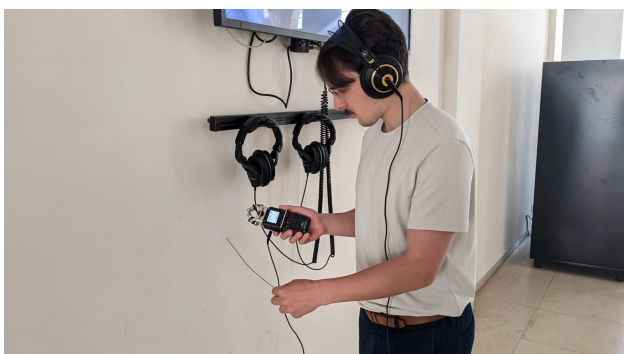
Recording the Material

With the Superball, I recorded the stairway of the main building of our university. I started at the entry hall, next to a vending machine and a television playing musical performances on free-to-use headphones. In one hand, I held the Superball, in the other a recording device. Then I started swiping the wall of the building with the stalk end of the Superball and slowly walking to the beginning of the steps of the stairway. Here, I switched to the railing, swiping the bars of it in a relatively unstable tempo one by one, switching between proceeding faster and slower. While I was going up the stairs, I also encountered other objects, like a sanitizer dispenser or a fire extinguisher. In addition, I also swiped on some bars of different materials like wood or aluminum. I did this twice and chose the second recording, which was about 6 minutes in total.



Material that was not intended

After I first listened to the newly recorded audio material, I discovered some unintended sounds. For example, a quiet snippet of the audio the television was playing through the headphones, a door that closed forcefully, the vending machine that started to refrigerate, or the automatic slide door opening. Most of these sounds then ended up playing a major role in the composition.



Material selection, cutting

The architecture of the house had a great influence on the cutting procedure. Certain lengths of phrases were already predetermined by the length of the railings, the distances between pillars and other spatial conditions.

I sorted the audio according to the physical material that produced the sound. Scrubbing the wall, swiping the bars, hitting different objects. Three major classes of sounds evolved: Sounds produced by the concrete wall, produced by the bars, and unintended sounds. In the digital audio workstation I highlighted the different sounds classes with different colours for a better overview.

Transformation

I started to look deeper into the sounds. I played with their tempo, their pitch, audio effects and other important parameters to achieve unique sounds and atmospheres from the original material. At this point, I was surprised by the value and usefulness of the unintended sounds recorded, that would have been edited out otherwise.

Arranging sounds in time

While I was still transforming sounds, I already arranged some sequences of sound events that I thought would go well with or after each other. Often, these event's origin was from the same group of material classified above. It was important, that every sound was the consequence of another sound. A sequence of such connected sounds then formed a *field*. When I was pleased with the outcome of such an audible field, I sometimes used the technique to render it into a new audio file and use it as new source material. Cutting it again, playing it in reverse, transforming it, to dive even deeper into the spectrum of the sounds I could get from the original material. I also created further causalities by letting one musical event directly affect another, thus drawing a rather blurred common theme through the piece. Different parts were emerging and I connected these parts together to give them a dramaturgical order.



Figure 1: Screenshot of the multitrack editing session

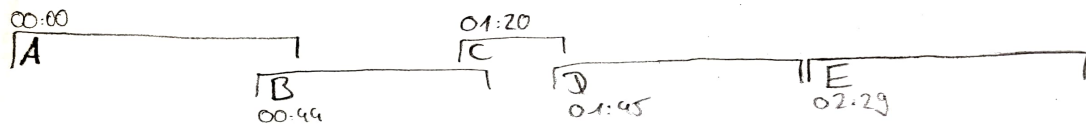
Musical Form

The piece can be divided into five parts:

- Part A, which can be characterized as „first dive“
- Part B as „rhythmic textures“
- Part C as „percussive singular events“
- Part D as „wide fields“
- Part E as „fields emerging“

This characterization evolved after the composition was finished.

In these parts, most sounds can be traced back to their same physical origin. For example, most sounds you hear in part B are actually from swiping the bars of the railing. But I didn't want it to be too obvious, so I always made it interfere with sounds of different origin.



Drawing 1: Visualization of the five parts

Performance

The piece was premiered as part of the Modulometer concert on May 25th 2023 in Echoraum in Vienna. It was played back from a computer while I interpreted the volume.

