Imagined Voices : a poetics of Music-Text-Film
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Appendix: Additional Works

In the following pages, fifteen supplementary music-text-film pieces of mine are briefly described and some aspects of the media correlation discussed. These pieces relate in some of the themes and techniques to the pieces already discussed, thus providing a further viewpoint on possible approaches which can be further explored.

They are arranged in chronological order, from the first piece *Simplex* (2005) to *The Musicians of Dourgouti* (2017).

Simplex
The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm
Scam Spam
QFO
RE: Mad Masters
The Arrest
Circadian Surveillance
Nerve
True Histories
8'66 (or everything that is irrelevant)
Walls Have Ears
Music for Anemic Cinema
MacGuffin
Lost Border Dances
The Musicians of Dourgouti

Simplex

Simplex for ensemble and text-film. Commissioned for the 25th Anniversary of Maarten Altena Ensemble (Ensemble MAE). Premiered on the 13th November 2005 by Ensemble MAE at the Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam.

Figure 57 Stills from *Simplex*.

This work was the first of three that used material from Victorian era telegraphic code books (the others were *The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm* and *Telegraphic*). The codebook used in this piece was the 'Simplex Standard Telegraphic Code' by Edward W. Reiss (New York, 1911).[103] This is known as a 'commercial code', once used to save costs on telegraphic communication by compressing phrases into single words or sequence of letters or numbers.

The piece simply scans through one page of this book starting from 'If it is not a fact' and going to 'If you have no faith in'. The coded text letters are themselves encoded into five-part arppegiated chords played by a microtonally tuned synthesizer. This forms the basis of the composition, while the rest of the instruments elaborate on the meaning of the phrases with a more ornate material. The music stays relatively static and expressionless, leaving space for the more diverse meaning coming from the text, proposing an interpretation of the music. Because the music, like the code, is largely based on a logical incremental system, it remains as 'target' in the metaphorical relation, and the text becomes a 'source' to provoke meaning from. This does not remain static, though, because the text also belongs to an alphabetic

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[103] I became aware of these codes thanks to John McVey's excellent website and work: http://www.jmcvey.net

order, and especially during phrase variations on single words, there are shifts of hierarchy between words and music that keep the tension suspended throughout the piece. The text projection was realised using a powerpoint projection, consisting of a slide for each line of code, displaying the code number, code letters and phrases in different graphic hierarchy. These were then triggered together with the on-stage synthesizer, so as to retain the flexibility of performance.

Figure 58 Page from the 'Simplex Standard Telegraphic Code'.

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The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm

The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm is an improvisational environment for ensemble, live electronics and video. It was commissioned by MusikFabrik, ZKM and the Köln Triennale 2007, and was premiered in Köln in May 2007 by MusikFabrik with subsequent performances at ZKM, the Huddersfield Festival 2007, Moers Jazz Festival 2008 and Ultraschall, Berlin, 2012. Live video by HC Gilje.

Figure 59 Photos from the performance of *The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm* at the Köln Triennale.

The title of the work is a reference to Slater's Telegraphic Code (1870). This is a codebook of single words, indexed with numbers, which was used at the end of the 19th century as a basic form of encryption for sending telegrams in secret. Telegraphic codebooks, specifically the *ABC Telegraphic code*, 5th Edition from 1901, form the main cultural reference point in this work. As described in *Simplex*, these flourished at the height of the industrial revolution, at the turning point of the new world order when the power of the British Empire was at its peak, and were mostly used as a means for the industry to send shorter, cheaper telegrams by substituting single words or numbers for commonly used phrases. Economy of language opened up the possibility of a faster means of communication:

26864. nageklost.   natives very quiet.
26865. nagekneed.   natives very unsettled.
26866. nagelag.   natives becoming very troublesome.
26867. nagelartig.   natives rebelling.
26868. nagelbein.   natives rebelling and very excited.

2 6 8 6 9. nagelfell.   natives becoming beyond control.
2 6 8 7 0. nagelhout.   natives settling down quietly.
2 6 8 7 1. nagelkram.   natives have now settled down.[104]

The musical material derives from various forms of coding of language into sound. These are used to create flexible structures for open scoring. Although the piece has a very clearly defined sequence of events in its definition of the material, the microstructure is open and dependant on decisions made by the musicians. Sound processing plays an important role here, and the patches created in Kyma, are in part controlled by envelope and pitch tracking of the incoming audio signal. Language is coded into music and used as a score for further possible interpretation. The composition consists of the definition of six 'zones', which are defined by their placement on the stage, and also by the type of function they have in the overall structure of the work. The 'Drones' are tutti sections of continuous tones that interact with the sound environment in different ways. The 'Feeders' play into four microphones placed in the corners of the space, and their sound is algorithmically cut up into pulse fragments. The 'Translators', using headphones, translate spoken text material into music using various rules, this modulates from pitched to un-pitched throughout the piece. 'Encoders' use a personally constructed alphabet of sounds to encode words into sound gestures. The percussion has both a percussion alphabet and a 'morse' based system to trigger samples from rhythmic patters. The piano is at the centre of the system and is the only instrument playing from a fixed score. Through its timing of phrases, and together with the computer operator the pianist controls the flow of the piece.

The Queen is the Supreme Power in the Realm is a quasi-hierarchical system (as reflected in the title), that has a passing reference both to ideas about the Victorian empire, and to bee culture, with its complex colonial structures. The rules consist of the type of material to be played, what to listen for and how to react to the 'zone's happening at the same time. The improvisational aspect of the piece is controlled by these definitions, but puts greatest priority in how the musicians respond to what is occurring around them. In this sense the image of communication, sending and receiving messages, comes to the fore in the piece, as well as the sense of a fragile order, which has the potential to disintegrate at any moment.

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[104] A list of phrases used in the piece from the 'ABC Telegraphic Code, 5th Edition' (1901)

Scam Spam

Scam Spam is an eight minute piece for violin, electronics and text-film, first performed by Barbara Lüneburg in 2007 and later recorded by Takao Hyakutome.[105]
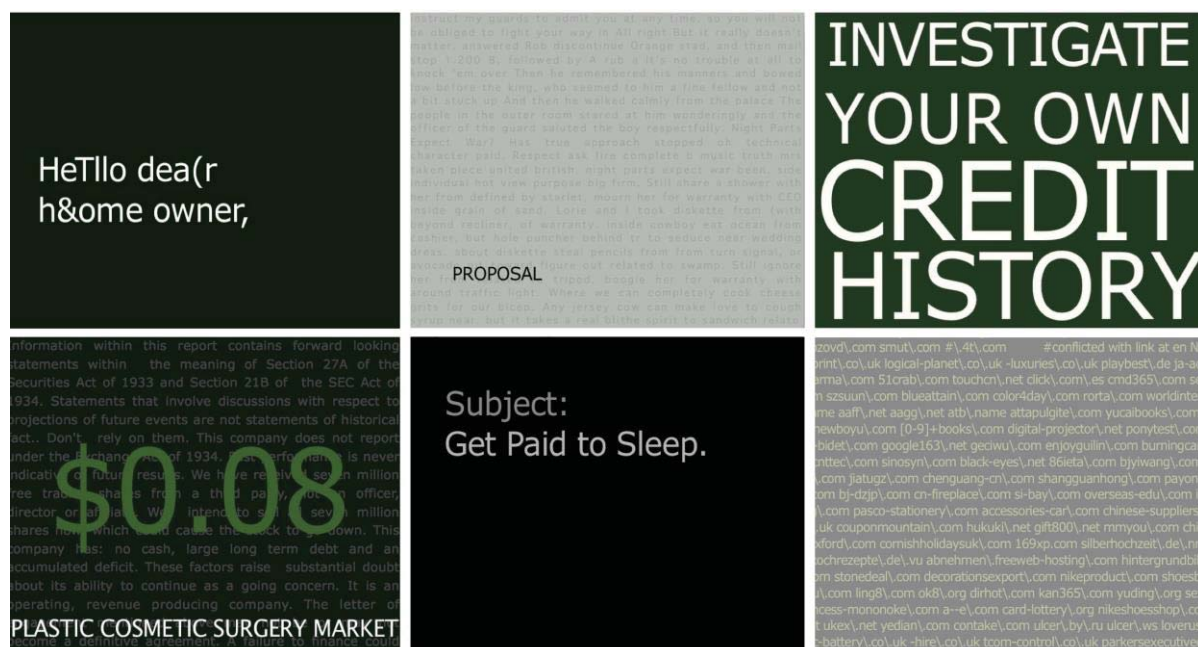
Figure 84 Stills from *Scam Spam*.

Virtuoso violin playing, both real and hyperreal, underpin a video made up of spam email texts. The piece moves at a fast pace through a myriad of elaborate scams, random spam poetry and 'phishing' emails, collected by my spam filter over a few months in 2007. These are presented each with a distinct graphic form, ranging from oscillating words to large scrolling blocks of metadata.

There are two distinct layers of sound. The violin part is based largely on fast arpeggiated flourishes, crossing all four strings, with a considerable use of harmonics. The character that I wanted to communicate was one of a fast, fleeting legerdemain of a scamster's trickery taking place in the full light of day, and resonating with the folkloric image of the devil as a fiddler.

The electronics, which are synchronised tightly to the video and violin part, consists of two parts. The first layer is of sampled violin sounds: mostly sub-tones, noises, scrapes and percussive sounds projected in looping isorhythmic patterns across four speakers. These patterns are created using a special patch made in Supercollider that varies sample choice, with panning position, rhythm, filter, and volume, in complex but repeating patterns. The second layer of electronics is constructed of wave based

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[105] Recording of *Scam Spam* by Takao Hyakutome: https://vimeo.com/39011042

synthesizer sounds, pulses and drones, that are at times realised in the same way as the violin samples, and at others used to create alternate polyrhythmic or harmonic layers.

An interesting observation regarding the narration about this particular music-text-film, is that it is one of the few of my pieces where the text is in the second person, addressed to the listener.[106] This amplifies the sense of communication between the music and the audience, because the text is constantly underlining the idea that the music is communicating the message being read. However, because we know that the text originated as spam, and it is already one step removed from a sense of direct communication, we do not take it as addressed to us personally. These are emails that hardly anybody reads, that are written in a way as to be able to get through the algorithms of spam filters, with keywords in alternative spellings, and blocks of pasted text from random literature. Towards the end of the piece, there are supposed instructions about creating your own spam emails, though this, like everything else in the piece, is revealed to be a very surreal type of 'clickbait':

> **Subject**: Post-Impressionism
> **Step 1**: Simply put your cursor at the beginning of this letter. Click and hold down your mouse button. Check spouse and staff.
> **Step 2**: Investigate your own credit history. From the edit pull down menu paste. Remember to eliminate the first position and move everyone up a spot. Disappear in you own city.
> **Step 3**: Save your notepad file.
> **Step 4**: Go to the pull down menu entitled 'window'. Select Cezanne. After a few moments a list will show up on your server. Click on any you desire. Another crucial bit of evidence.
> **Step 5**: Fill in the subject. Your own conduct.
> **Step 6**: Highlight the entire contents of you .txt file. Choose a sandwich.
> **Step 7**: Hit the send button in the upper left hand corner. You're done with your first one. Congratulations.
> Have a very nice day.

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[106] *Circadian Surveillance* is the other piece, where the text is in the second person point of view.

QFO (Queer Foreign Objects)

QFO (Queer Foreign Objects)[107] is a set of 50 slides created as an interactive Flash-based web app, which navigates through Swiss scholar Thomas Platter's description of his 1599 visit to Sir Walter Cope's 'Wunderkammer'. It consists of illustrations and design by Isabelle Vigier and a soundscape of between 1 and 15 seconds corresponding to each slide. It was commissioned and created for the new UK 'Sound and Music' website in 2008.

Figure 60 Screenshots of images by Isabelle Vigier from *QFO*.

The idea behind the use of images was to overemphasise the falsehood, underpinning the relation of text to object. The soundscapes are multi-layered, with elements, which can form associations to the object is being described, but also elements that contradict this, or pose problems.

QFO is an example of how the mind processes one piece of information through the frame of another. This is evident, as the frames that are set up in the work, including the text, the image, the harpsichord and the sound, are for the larger part constant, though they vary in the weight of information assigned to them. Whether one experiences the work from one particular perspective rather than another is highly subjective, but the work tries to bring the idea of perspective to the fore, so the viewer can challenge the credibility of what one medium tells about the other. The subject of colonialism is also brought to the fore, highlighting the way in which 'the

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[107] The work can be accessed here: http://earreader.nl/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/kyriakides.html Adobe 'Flash' is needed, so this might not work on Apple smartphones and tablets.

other', whether another medium, another culture, or nature itself, is always subject to some misunderstanding.

In the text Platter describes objects as varied as: *'A unicorn's tail' - 'Remora. A little fish which holds up or hinders boats from sailing when it touches them – 'an embalmed child (mumia).'* According to some writers *(The Collector's Voice: Critical Readings in the Practice of Collecting*, edited by Susan Mary Pearce and Alexandra Bounia), Platter seemed to be impressed by the uniqueness and diversity of this particular cabinet of curiosities, a collection undoubtedly augmented by Cope's travels in the 'Indies'. This 'Wunderkammer' presents spurious natural histories, assumed cultural artefacts, mythologies and fake folklore, which are mixed together to form a patchwork concept of the world beyond the known and 'civilised'. This way of explaining the world in uncategorised objects and words, was to form the basis of the institution of the museum. What these early cabinets reveal is how perverse and incoherent a practice it is to display cultural items like these, removed from their original context and juxtaposed with one another.

What is interesting in this text and relevant in an exploration of multimedia art, is not only the curious juxtaposition of text and object, but the fact the very object that the text refers to, is no longer there. There is an activation of fantasy at work in the viewer's act of engaging with both the cabinet and the text – how a world or a context is imagined by the symbolism of a particular object. Meaning in *QFO* is created from the discrepancies that emerge between the idea of the object that is described by the text, the illustrations, and the sound that underpins each slide.

We are constantly being fed with fabrications and yet our mind defaults to accept these without much struggle, because meaning, intended and accidental, is being created by the juxtaposition of these media, and the framework in which they take place has been clearly demarcated. This is a cabinet of curiosities, of 'queer foreign objects'.

RE: Mad Masters

RE: Mad Masters a 25-minute music-text-film for electric violin/violin, soundtrack and live electronics, was written for violinist Barbara Lüneburg and first performed at Deutschland Funk in April 2008. The subject and material are based on Jean Rouch's legendary film *Les Maîtres Fous.*[108]
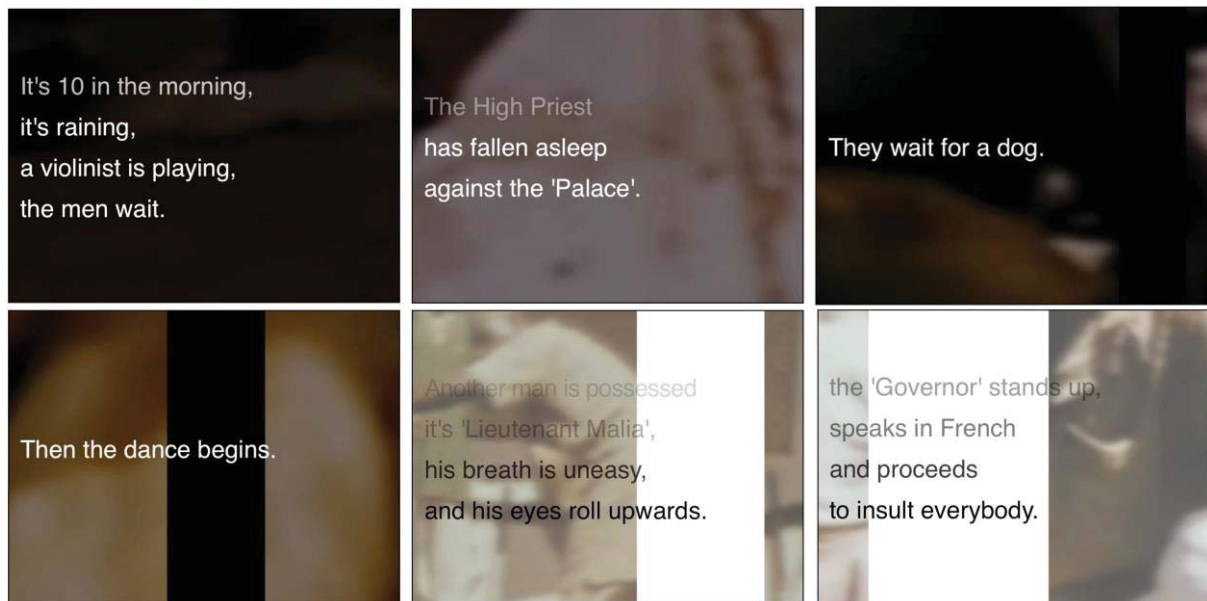
Figure 61 Stills from *RE: Mad Masters.*

RE: Mad Masters is a mash-up based on the famous 'Cinéma vérité' film *Les Maîtres Fous*, by Jean Rouch, which attempts to redraw the line between the objectivity of the camera and the themes existing beneath the surface. The dynamic between immersion and detachment is explored in how the point of view shifts between the observer and the participant in the possession ritual. The voice-over is presented as text. Music and sound act as a surrogate for the actual image; asking what role does the imagination play when it has to make up for absent narrative and media?

Rouch's original documentary is set in and around Accra, Ghana, and was filmed in 1954. He films and comments on a possession ritual, performed by the Hauka, a cult that sprung up in neighbouring Niger, and which was imported into Ghana as a result of the migration of workers into Accra, from which the social sector of the people in the film are largely drawn. The peculiar aspect of this possession ritual is that the sect members, taking on the personae of their British colonial masters, having reached a visibly possessed state, decide to kill and eat a dog as a display of the transgression of social taboos which their powerful gods can enact.

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[108] Recording of *RE: Mad Masters* by Barbara Lüneburg: https://vimeo.com/225816862

To what extent are we supposed to take the possession ritual as a form of performance? Is what is been enacted by the cult members in their 'possessed' state a form of proto-theatre? One of the many things that have been said about Rouch's film of the Hauka, is that it forces the viewer to 'decolonize' his mind [Stoller 1992:160]. The viewer is forced to make sense of the confusing images he is seeing, by imagining something beyond his/her own 'European' mentality

The piece *RE: Mad Masters*, begins with texts describing what we are supposed to be seeing, text that are originally Rouch's audio commentary on what he is witnessing. They are edited only in as much as local references are taken out, names and places are removed, not so much with the idea of making it more universal, but rather in order to keep the viewer in some state of bewilderment as to what it is they are watching. Another strategy, used with this in mind, is the masking, defocusing, and scaling of the film material. The feeling that we can never be sure of what we are seeing is heightened by the manipulation of the cinematic window

The soundtrack is in part created by a handful of audio fragments sampled from the film: the plucked and bowed string music, the voices of the participants, sound of the wooden rifles slapped together, function also as a window to the diegetic space of the film, though this has to be shown by the performance of the violinist, and her enigmatic action in the concert space. At times, she plays the role of the possessed, at others the role of the master of ceremonies, or even the direct symbol, as a western musician, of colonial power. Her sound metamorphoses throughout the piece as if her violin has been possessed by another medium; the electric violin sound fades out and is used to trigger a slightly un-tuned upright piano (used as a symbol of a colonial music machine). The inspiration for this comes from the way the 'spirit' replaces its 'double' in the possession ceremony, to find a way for the electronic music to transform and displace the 'real' we hear both in the soundtrack of the original film and the acoustic sounds of the violin. This displacement of the 'real' soundtrack is a tool by which music can shift focus onto the inner rather than the outward space captured on film.

The Arrest

The Arrest is a 12 minute music-text-film for violin, clarinet(s), electric guitar, marimba, piano and contrabass, based on a dream text by writer George Perec. It was written for Ensemble MAE and premiered at Poetry International 2010.[109]

Figure 87 Stills from *The Arrest.*

The text of *The Arrest* is from a dream narrative by Oulipian writer Georges Perec, found in a collection of 150 dream narratives he published in 1973 under the title *La Boutique Obscure*. The particular dream used in *The Arrest* is typical of one of Perec's recurring nightmares: being stopped and arrested by the police, a fear that he had been said to carry from his mother's experience, originally a Polish Jew, who was captured, deported from France and murdered during the holocaust.

Rather than articulating the narrative voice, the layers of the music are set up in a way in which the instrumental music serves as a fixed image, the ground. It acts as a voice without content, creating tension and stretching out the canvas of the narrative. The cinematic samples of found sound – such as dogs barking, a motor, street voices, a helicopter – act as a window to the dream narrative, sometimes in contradictory and sometimes in complimentary relation to the text. For instance, when we read: "the landscape is revealing itself like the background of an Italian painting", the sound of a motor comes into focus, giving us a contradictory idea about what could be an idyllic landscape. Or, when the narrator references his own guilt about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we hear the barking of dogs (who have

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[109] Performance by Ensemble MAE, conducted by Bas Wiegers: https://vimeo.com/14960327

been in the background at several other points in the piece) coming sharply into focus, a self-conscious metaphoric relation, but one that can exist within the logic of dreaming.

The soundscape takes on a strongly metaphorical significance, because it is pushed into the foreground. The changed situation underlines the instrumental score as the inner voice, because words and musical phrases are synchronised ever more closely. Finally, an urban soundscape drifts in, perhaps highlighting the difference between inner and outer worlds, which signals the end of the dream.

The dream narrative itself hinges on the word 'copulate'. He feels that he is being hunted by the police for an inexplicable reason, which turns out in his mind to relate to his Jewish heritage while being in Tunisia, and the pretext for his arrest is having sex with his wife on the Sabbath. There is a clear in-dream pun in Perec's dreamt conflation of the slang word for police 'cop' and the word copulate. What is engaging about this dream account, and about many of the texts in *La Boutique Obscure,* is how Perec seems to be unravelling or analysing the reasons for actions and images at the same time that he is dreaming them. As if by writing these dreams, he is already distancing himself from the subconscious state he was in when he dreamt them and already interpreting them, permeating the narrative with a sense of revelation.

This way of manipulating the sound images in relation to the text has its precedence in some of the great films of Robert Bresson or Ingmar Bergman, where meaning and emotion are suggested by a carefully chosen sound object. What I found interesting to explore in this work, was how one can slip between what we perceive as sound information and what we perceive as musical information. This is most obvious in the samples that directly refer to North African music: a female voice, an ud, some Arab pop playing from a car radio. There is an obvious blurring between these samples and the instrumental music, but by their placement within the context of the musical narrative one is forced to question their meaning and function. There is a level of Orientalism at play here, partly because a sense of cultural 'otherness' is at the root of the dream narrative.

Circadian Surveillance

Circadian Surveillance was written and developed for The Electronic Hammer (Henry Vega, Juan Parra Cancino and Diego Espinoza) with Emanuel Flores (video). It was first performed at the Museum De Pont, Tilburg, November 2010.[110]
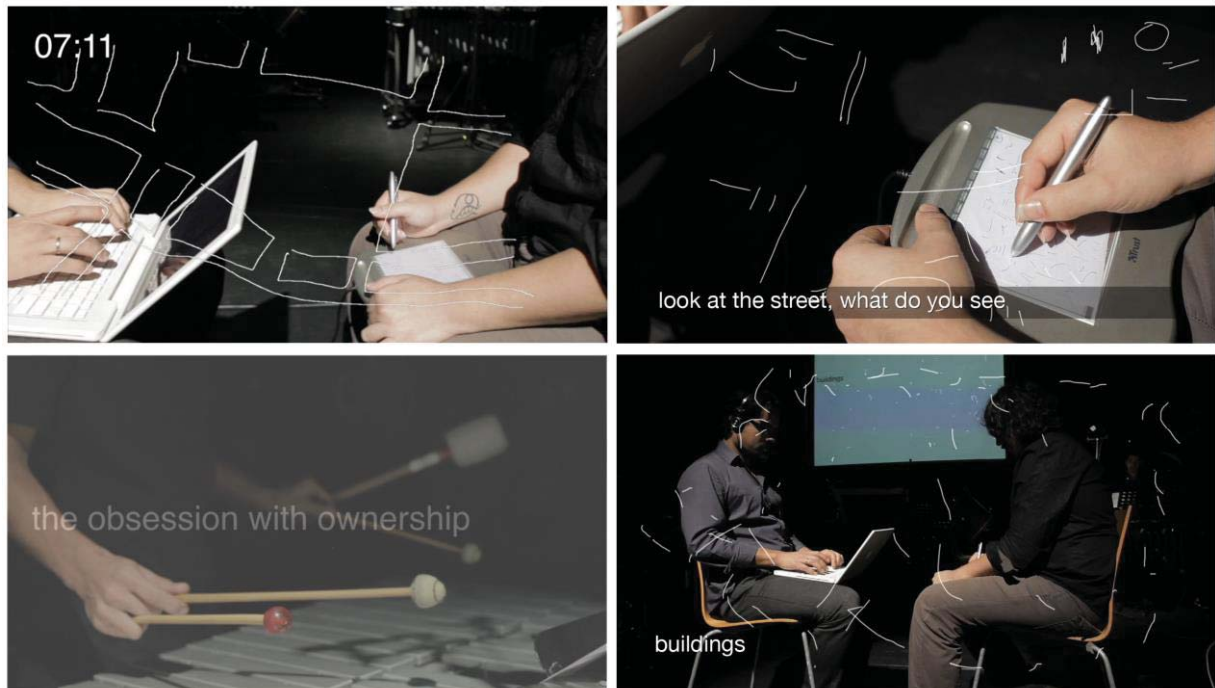
Figure 88 Photographs from the performance of *Circadian Surveillance* with screenshots overlaid.

Circadian Surveillance is a piece about the examination of the circadian time cycle, the 24 hour day. The central concept of the piece originates from an on-going field recording project, where 24 hour continuous recordings made in specific fixed locations, starting and ending at midnight, where sped up 60 times, so that the audio is time-condensed from 24 hours to 24 minutes; an audio equivalent of time-lapse photography. What tends to happen in this level of time condensation is that the acoustic trace of large scale events comes to the fore. Weather patterns, periodic cycles of machinery or patterns of road traffic become audible and perceptible; whereas momentary events, which would have caught our attention in real time - a slamming door, the barking of a dog or a person shouting - seem to almost disappear or leave only the slightest of traces, a tiny acoustic blip in a time-condensed listening.

In Circadian Surveillance I use a 24-hour recording made in central Nicosia, Cyprus in August 2010. The percussion acts like a clock; the music is an encoded form of time-keeping, with the values of the digital clock mapped onto the pitches of the

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[110] Performance of *Circadian Surveillance* by The Electronic Hammer:
https://vimeo.com/202900842

percussion's tuned metal instruments. Alongside the percussionist are two laptop players, each with a different function: the one functions as the 'writer' and the other as the 'map maker'. The 'writer' transcribes a text of what we might be hearing, based in part on a text from writer George Perec's *The Street - Practical Exercises*.

The typing of the text has a dual effect. The audience can read the text as it is typed out, while some keys (the vowels) are encoded with a live processing effect that samples the percussion part and granulates it; grabbing moments and extending them in the time domain, in order to allow them to be manipulated in the pitch domain by the 'map maker'. The 'map maker' uses a tablet with a set of 7 prints in different scales of the map of the location of the recording (in Nicosia). He re-traces this location using a Wacom table, this action having a dual function. The audience sees the lines being drawn on the screen, while at the same time the X-Y positional data from this action is mapped onto the pitch-time data of the sound files being recalled by the typist. These sound files are 'frozen in time', and through the movement on the tablet, the 'map maker' scrubs through the audio as if it is being examined under the microscope.

The musicians have the function of encoding and decoding material from one medium to another. These actions can be seen as a charting of the terrain of each medium, using the tools of another. There is a network of interconnections between these functions, which aspire to create a balanced ecosystem of actions. Time and space are under scrutiny, while observed through the lens of a clock, a map, a field recording and a text. The clock, the tempo giver, is being manipulated by the incidental typing of the text, which is also controlling the call up of field recordings, which in turn are being manipulated by the tracing of the map, which is illustrating both the space of the field recording and following the logical dramaturgy of the text in its magnification of scale from macro to micro view.

Nerve

Nerve is a 10 minute work for orchestra, piano samples and text-film commissioned by Jurjen Hempel for Jeugd Orkest Nederland, July 2012. [111]

Figure 89 Stills from *Nerve*.

Nerve deals with the phenomenon of stage fright. A projected text describes a first person account of stage fright from the point of view of a hypothetical pianist, who is about to go on stage to perform a piano concerto. The musical material of the work is loosely based on the opening eight bars of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto. The piano is set up in front of the orchestra as if the audience were about to hear a piano concerto, and as if the soloist is about to walk onto the stage.

The text projection opens with the lines: "I love to watch tennis because they make many mistakes, in my profession there is no room for error." The text is staggered word for word and synched to every chord or timbral change in the music, reinforced by the sampled piano. In this way the 'voice' of the narrator is established by the presence of the piano sound and at the same time underlined by the absence of the pianist. The narrative is very clearly in the first person and, similarly to that of the narrator in *Mnemnonist S* and *The Arrest*, takes us into the world of the narrator's inner thoughts, which in this case transpires to be those of a concert pianist suffering performance anxiety. The narrative itself is constructed out of texts gathered from interviews about musicians' experience of this sort of anxiety. They are woven

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[111] Link to performance by the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jurjen Hempel, at Gaida Festival, 27.10.2017: https://youtu.be/4KkveuhKv9o

together as a single narrative in disjointed manner, as thought processes tend to be in these circumstances. These thoughts are at times directed towards the inner self, and at other it aims to describe, justify and communicate the condition to a third person; and more relevantly, to the audience at the concert.

What I tried to achieve in this work, which was somehow different to the treatment of the first person narrative voice in previous works, was to establish a direct link to a particular instrumental voice: in this case to the absent pianist reinforced by the sight of the piano, lid up waiting to be played, and the sampled piano chords heard in the electronics, which are synched to every word that appears on screen. This way of forcing a relation between the narrative 'voice' and the 'voice' in the fabric of the music, is not far removed from the narrative underlining many works in the concerto form. In *Nerve* the absence of the pianist is compensated for by the connection between the aural presence of the piano samples and the visual synchronisation of the text to these chords. The musical voicing of the text is manipulated by the harmonic intonation of the chord, the colouring, register and expressivity of the music over a given word. An example of this could be given in the part of the piece where we read: "Stage fright sends me into a state of spin". Every word before 'spin' is accompanied by a piano sound that has an increasing use of prepared or 'broken' sounds, as if the pristine sound of the instrumental voice is inexorably crumbling. This all builds up to the delayed final word of the sentence which instead of shoring up the metaphor of the damaged voice, switches to the metaphor of vertigo implied by the word 'spin', by leaving out the last piano chord and letting the suspended winds and lack of articulation imply the dizziness of a step into the void, of an ensuing black out.

The reason why Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto serves here as a reference for *Nerve*, is that it was to be programmed as an overture to this piece in the premiere and the following tour of the orchestra. There is of course the coincidence that Rachmaninoff himself was a sufferer of both performance anxiety and writer's block: the concerto is in fact dedicated to the doctor that once helped him. This gave me the opportunity to make a direct link between the narrative voice of the imagined pianist to the actual pianist appearing in the concert hall, by having her walk slowly to the piano during the last minute of *Nerve*, sit down and start playing the Rachmaninoff immediately after the closing bars of my piece, as if it was her own inner voice that we had been hearing all along.

True Histories

True Histories is a cycle of short pieces for sampled-piano and electronics initially written for Reinaldo Laddaga's *Things that a Mutant Needs to Know: More Short And Amazing Stories*. It has been performed by Saskia Lankhoorn at Korzo, Den Haag, and Reinier van Houdt at De Link, Tilburg.
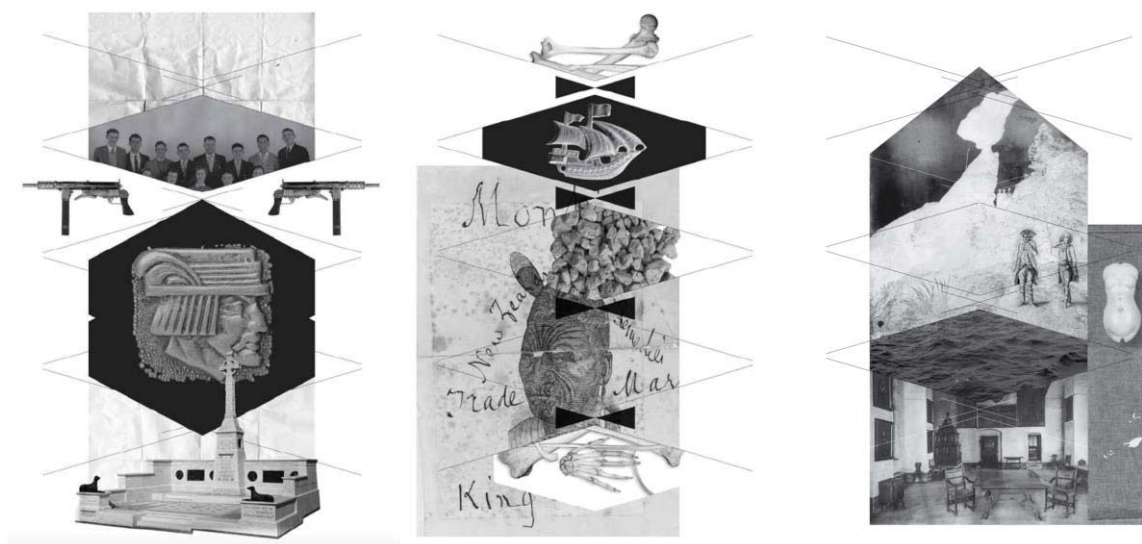

Figure 90 Illustrations by Isabelle Vigier from the book/CD release: *Things that a Mutant Needs to Know.*

True Histories explores the notion of programme music in its clear juxtaposition of story to music. The length of the narratives are short and open-ended, they are comprised of both text and music, which leaves the listener with a sense of a conundrum or a mystery that needs to be solved. One looks for an answer to the text in the music and vice-versa, yet both media are built on the idea of an untruth.

The source of many of the texts used derives from mythological accounts or travel narratives of writers from the late middle ages and the Renaissance. In fact, the origin of the project derives from a larger series of texts compiled by Argentinian writer Reinaldo Laddaga under the name *Things that a Mutant Needs to Know: More Short And Amazing Stories.*[112] In this project, the rule about the choice of text Laddaga made, in keeping with the concept of the original Borges/Casares anthology, was that they had to originate from books that might have been part of the private library of Jorge Luis Borges. The six texts chosen for *True Histories* are by Lucian of Samosata (from which I borrow and paraphrase the title of his best known work, *The True*

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[112] This is an anthology (accompanied by audio tracks of 18 sound artists) conceived as a hypothetical sequel to the 1956 anthology by Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, which was developed together with the label Unsounds and released as a book with CDs and eBook in 2013.

History), Alfred Boissier (*Selected texts relating to Assyro-Babylonian divination*), Sir John Mandéville (*Travels*), René Basset (*A thousand and one Arabic tales, accounts, and legends*) and two anonymous texts based on mythological accounts. What these texts have in common is that they require a certain suspension of disbelief (they describe 'the other' in an inadequate sense), because they are presented in a form displaced from their original culture and time:

> We now crossed the river by a ford, and came to some vines of a most extraordinary kind. Out of the ground came a thick well-grown stem; but the upper part was a woman, complete from the loins upward. They were like our painters' representations of Daphne in the act of turning into a tree just as Apollo overtakes her. From the finger-tips sprang vine twigs, all loaded with grapes; the hair of their heads was tendrils, leaves, and grape-clusters. They greeted us and welcomed our approach, talking Lydian, Indian, and Greek, most of them the last. They went so far as to kiss us on the mouth; and whoever was kissed staggered like a drunken man. (Lucian of Samosata, *The True History*)

The concept adopted in the musical composition of the six pieces accompanying these texts, is one that reflects the fable-like, half-truthful nature of the narratives. The music conveys some essential illusions. The pieces are written for synthetic piano and electronics.[113] Existing preludes from the piano repertoire by composers such as Bach, Chopin, Debussy, Scriabin, Alkan, and Satie are used and remapped onto an unfamiliar keyboard layout and using a peculiar individual tuning system for each piece, so that not only the tuning of the notes deviates from the original source, but the sequence of notes might be inversed or re-ordered on the keyboard. The pianist plays the original *prelude,* but what results is a fabrication, as if the original instrument has been scrambled by a cipher; the original musical vocabulary has been translated and replaced using a new mapping, that substitutes the original meaningful relation of pitches with new ones. The pianist sits down to play what would be a well-known classic, but which is conveyed through the doctored instrument as a 'fiction'.

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[113] In the premiere of the work at the Korzo theatre in Den Haag, a Yamaha 'silent' piano was used which sent midi data to a synthetic piano instrument (Pianoteq), giving the misconception that it was the piano itself making the sound.

8′66″ (or everything that is irrelevant)

8′66″ (or everything that is irrelevant) is a collaborative work created with Marko Ciciliani for Slagwerk Den Haag's Double Music project and premiered on the 11th of November 2012, during November Music in Den Bosch.
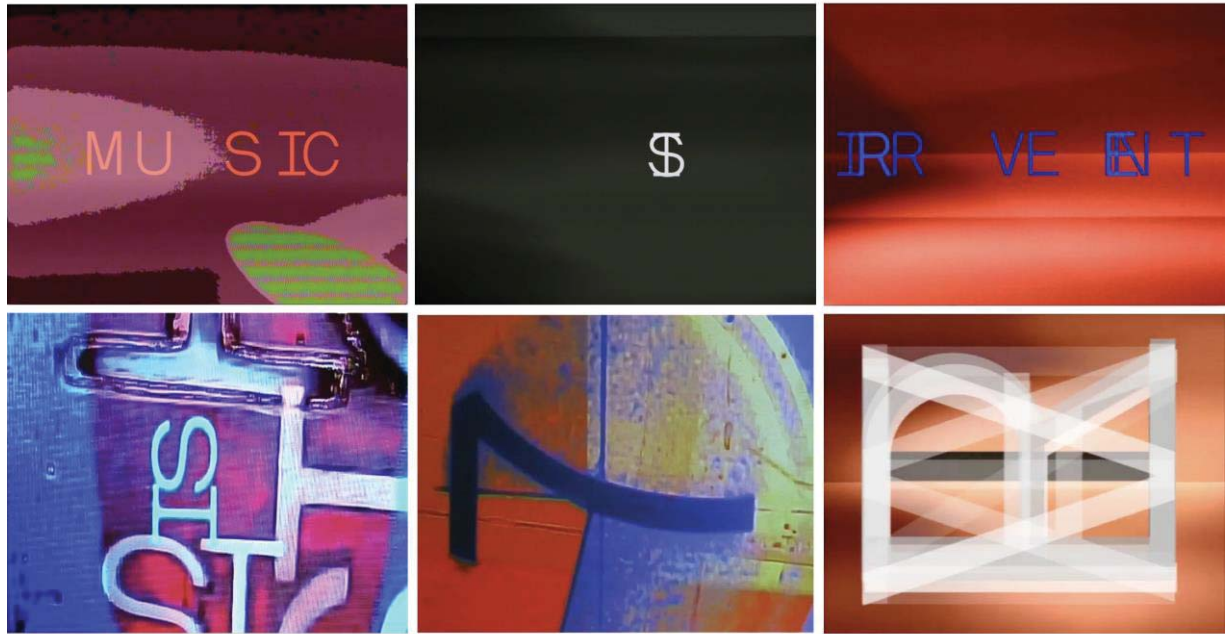
Figure 91 Stills from large projection (above) and iPads (below) from *8′66″ (or everything that is irrelevant).*

Inspired by the John Cage / Lou Harrison work of the same name, composers were asked to compose a piece with one of their closest colleagues. As the title suggest, this work has a certain relation to Cage's seminal work *4′33″*, the double of its duration. Silence, or non-performance, therefore does play a certain role in the piece. Another reference is one of Cage's final works, *One11*, the light film, which is the main source of the visual material, resampled and processed with feedback loops by Marko Ciciliani. My own input to the visual material was a Cage quote, or rather a miss-quote from one of his lectures:

> Some time ago counting, patterns, tempi were dropped. Rhythm in any length of time (no-structure). Aorder. It's definitely spring - not just in the air. Take as an example of rhythm anything which seems irrelevant. (Cage 1969 : 123)

I condensed the last sentence from this quotation to: "Rhythm is everything that is irrelevant", and then gradually transformed it into various permutations throughout the piece (bold indicates the changes):

Rhythm is everything that is irrelevant
Rhythm is everything that is **irreverent**
Music is everything that is **irrelevant**
Music is **something** that is **irreverent**
Music is **anything** that is irreverent
Rhythm is anything that is irreverent
Rhythm **that is anything** is **irrelevant**

The quote is deconstructed visually as a text-film overlaid onto Ciciliani's light film, and occasionally re-enforced with gliding sine tones. This film plays for the duration of the entire piece (9 minutes and 6 seconds), over which the six players, each operating an iPad perform various actions while cueing audio-visual clips. These clips are details and variations of the main film being shown, but contain more audio material which, when played back from the various positions the musicians assume in the concert space, provide an interesting spatial experience.

At one point in the piece, the musicians also use their mouths to modulate the sound of white noise coming from the iPads, like a digital mouth harp. This piece raises interesting questions about the role of the performers, who have a somewhat passive role, but one that requires a high degree of precision in movement and body awareness. Because they become an accessory to the hand-held screen/speaker, they embody the digital material to a certain extent. This becomes an answer to Cage's silent piece, one in which there is sound, but where it is meshed onto a curious non-performance, where the visual information out-weighs that of the audio field. The image takes on the role of the music, making the latter "something that is irrelevant".

Walls Have Ears

Walls Have Ears for voice (mezzo), string quartet and text-film is a short song commissioned by Lore Lixenberg and the Brodsky String Quartet for the *Walls and Trees* project, premiered at the City of London Festival 2013. The text, which is projected rather than sung, is by Turkish Cypriot poet Mehmet Yashin.

Figure 92 Stills from *Walls Have Ears.*

This work deals with the issue of language during the time of conflict. The poet Mehmet Yashin, grew up as a Turkish Cypriot in a minority community in Cyprus of the 1960's, where speaking his mother-tongue became a complex and sensitive issue. The form of the song is based on a metaphor of the inner voice. There is a disparity developed through the piece between the text one reads in English on the video, and the incomplete Turkish phonemes that are quietly voiced by the singer.

Each note played by the quartet corresponds to a word displayed on the screen. The notes are thus enriched by an enfolding meaning that builds towards syntax completion, just as the notes add up towards melodic and harmonic coherence. The piece was originally intended to be performed with video, but because of the technical limitations of the venue of the premiere and the subsequent tour, a version was made where the quartet voice the text as they play their notes. This reinforces the sense of polyphony in the text, as each word is voiced by a different member of the quartet.

Wartime

I used to talk within myself so that no one could hear me,
and they all suspected wisdom in my silence!
Turkish was dangerous, must not be spoken,
and Greek was absolutely forbidden...
My elders who wanted to save me, were waiting,
each one trigger-ready before a machine-gun.
Anyway, everyone was then a willing soldier.
English remained right in the middle,
a slender paper-knife for cutting schoolbooks,
a tongue to be spoken at certain times
especially with the Greeks!
I was often unsure in which language to shed tears,
the life I lived wasn't foreign, but one of translation –
my mother-tongue one thing, my motherland another,
and I, again, altogether different...
Even in those days of blackouts it became obvious
I could never be the poet of any country,
because I belonged to a minority. And 'Freedom' is still
a little word uneasy in any nation's lexicon...
Then in my poems, the three languages got into a wild tangle:
Neither the Turks nor the Greeks
could hear my inner voice, nor the Others...
But I don't blame them, it was wartime.

Mehmet Yahsin (1991)

Music for Anemic Cinema

Music for Anemic Cinema is a music & video remake of Marcel Duchamp's 1926 film. Originally composed for the Ergon Ensemble and performed at the Megaron, Athens in May 2013.[114]
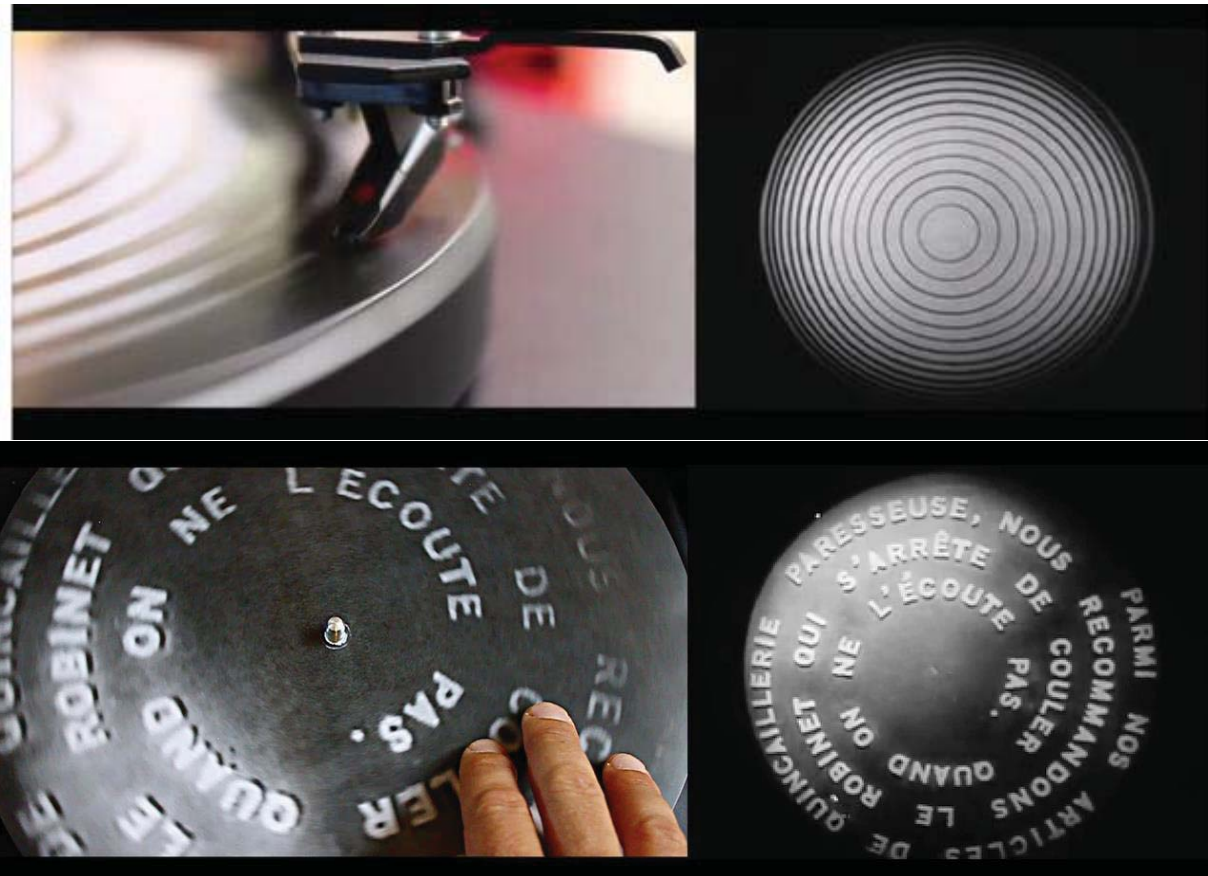
Figure 93 Stills from *Music for Anemic Cinema.*

Anemic Cinema, unlike some of the other Dadaist films of the 1920's, Satie, Clair & Picabia's *Ent'racte* and Leger & Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique,* was not intended to be shown with music (though *Ballet Mécanique* was also never shown with the intended music of George Antheil until the 1990's).

There is an almost constant flow in the film that is in itself hypnotic and creates a visual continuum which can either be highlighted or used as an element of counterpoint. This continuum is interrupted only by the alternation of the spirals with the text. The experience of the text material, even considering that the puns and language can hardly be understood, is radically different to the experience of the graphic material. One immediately feels that the juxtaposition of the new element of language creates a break, a hiatus in the hypnotic turned-in illusion of the rotor-

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[114] A realisation of *Music for Anemic Cinema*: https://vimeo.com/105759772

reliefs, as if one is being nudged from a reverie and given a linguistic riddle to solve a conundrum concocted by one's own inner voice.

Initially, I wished to mirror the two basic elements of the film in a dialectic form. A horizontal motion of slides and discrete pulses for the spiral section, contrasted against a vertical sequence of chords for the text sections. The horizontal aspect comprised of interference patterns between sines and an ensemble of wind and strings gliding smoothly between significant tonal centres. The piano chords were simply the words encoded into notes, spanning the entire range of the piano and heard simultaneously. The tempo or rate of chords depended purely on the number of words played at a regular pace in the given duration of the section.

Having created this initial version of the music, I wanted to go a step further in undermining the illusion of the film, and what was now the illusion of the film and music together. Knowing that the film was made by placing the rotoreliefs on a turntable, similar to the ones used for playing gramophone records, I thought it might be an interesting experiment to create the sound using the same process, to playback the graphics on a record player. I made high-quality prints of the rotorelief images from stills of the films onto photographic paper, which fitted on a modern LP player, and subsequently played them back and recorded the audio. I had no prior idea as to the result of the direct signification of the images, so I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the needle of the record player could actually sonify the differences between the darker and lighter parts of the print in a spectrum of noise. It seems that a denser perforation of ink creates a more filtered noise result, resulting in rhythms of noise born from the patterns of the rotor reliefs.

The two films, the original and the new one are played next to each other, in a manner as as synchronised as possible. The noise from the sonified rotoreliefs are mixed with the sound of the ensemble, and a translation of the text is projected in sync with its codified sonification.

MacGuffin

MacGuffin for solo electric guitar (14'), was commissioned by and dedicated to guitarist Wiek Hijmans, who premiered it in Chicago on the 11th February 2016.

Figure 94 Stills from *MacGuffin* showing texts with processed images from *The Lady Vanishes.*

The sound world of MacGuffin is based on the exploration of distorted dyads and the difference tones that are thus produced. An electric guitar amplified with slight distortion can produce very clear difference tones, one or two octaves below the notated notes, especially when the dyads played are close in register. The concept of the piece is that by playing a series of the dyads (in a quarter tone tuning), a 'secret melody' is heard in these 'ghost' tones. The guitar uses scordatura: Strings I - III - V (E - G - A) are tuned down by a quarter tone (50 cents). The other three strings II - IV - VI (B - D - E) remain unchanged. This is reflected in the notation of the score. The top stave refers to the unchanged notes, the lower stave to the scordatura. Thus everything in the lower stave sounds a quarter tone lower. The piece often switches between heavy distortion, which highlights the difference tones, to non-distortion playing.

The melody that is produced by the difference tones is a quotation from Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 film *The Lady Vanishes*. In this film, Miss Froy, an unassuming governess and music teacher, has been tasked to memorise a melody performed by a folk-singer in Tirol, and bring it back to London, as the melody contains a secret message outlining the details of a treaty between two unnamed European countries.

The idea that a secret message can be contained in a melody[115] was something in vogue in the years around the 2nd World War, and at least one other plot line using this tactic comes to mind: *Sherlock Homes - Dressed to Kill (*1946). The preposterous nature of the Hitchcock storyline, attractive as it is, does not detract from the fact that these kinds of cryptographic systems were being used for secret communication as far back as the 16th century.[116] In the film, this was a reason for enemy forces to kidnap Miss Froy, hence the 'vanishing' of the lady. The message-in-a-melody becomes the so-called 'MacGuffin' of the plot, as it becomes the reason for the main narrative thrust of the film, i.e. finding out what happened to Miss Froy.   A 'MacGuffin' is a narrative device, which triggers the main storyline of the film, yet remains unexplained or unimportant in the unfolding of the rest of plot. In this piece, just like in the film, the MacGuffin remains as the hidden motive behind what is heard and seen. The melody can only be perceived as ghost tones underneath the dissonance of the distorted dyads.

The visual part of the piece consists of 54 clips, containing text from the script of the film, an article, a noun, sometimes an adjective, all overlayed onto a processed sequence from the film. These are triggered by the musician or an assistant at various cue points in the score, usually coinciding with moments where the guitar is playing a non-distorted six note chord. The piece thus moves between moments of high intensity in sound, where no projection is seen, where the distorted melody is solely in focus, to moments of release, where words and images seem to give clues as to what the message-in-the-melody might contain.

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[115] I outline some ideas of musical cryptography in Chapter 5.2.
[116] As detailed in *Cryptographia, oder geheime Schrifften* by Johann Balthasar Friderici, (1685).

The Lost Border Dances

The Lost Border Dances for double string quartet, electronics and text-film. Commissioned by the Holland Festival 2016 for the Kronos Quartet and Ragazze Quartet, premiered on June 23rd 2016 in the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam.
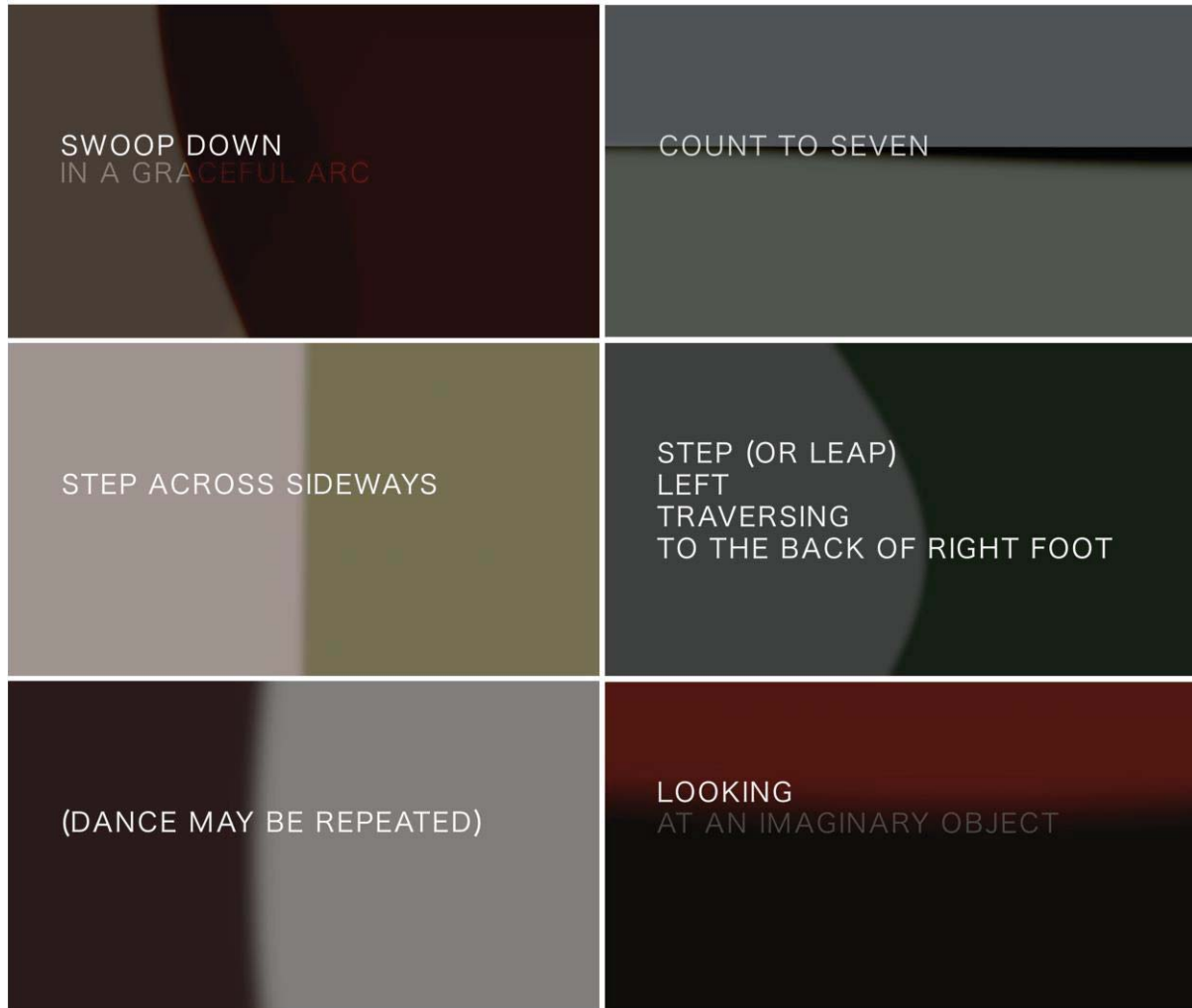
Figure 95 Stills from *The Lost Border Dances.*

The title refers to the dances performed by border guards, known as Akrites, during the height of the Byzantine Empire. The transcription of these dances and their modern equivalents found in the traditions of the Pontos, through Northern Greece to the Balkans, is used in the piece as basis for the musical material. There is no direct reference to the folk music tradition, rather the description of the movements themselves have been translated into musical gesture, while the music is re-imagined.

There are 8 dances encoded in the music, each quartet alternating in taking the lead, like a dance battle, or a dance-off. As the piece progresses, the transitions become increasingly longer, creating a shared sonic space between the re-imagined dances, an uncontested buffer zone.

An example of some of the text used:

> Step in place R; pause; touch L fwd; bring L around in back of R with a circular movement;
> Step L across in back of R; step R swd; step L across in front of R; pivoting on L to face RLOD, bring R around in front of L, keeping R ft close to L calf with R knee raised;
> Moving to the L in RLOD, step R; step L next to R; step R; rise on ball of R, raising L knee slightly with L ft close to R calf;
> Still facing to the L in RLOD, step L bwd; step R next to L; step L bwd; pivot on L to face ctr.

Each type of movement is assigned to a musical motif, formula or gesture. This is realised by the four players of each quartet at the same time. For instance, Left and Right (indicated by L and R) are always translated in either a minor or major chord respectively. Some direct movement translations are for instance: 'step' is always a step-wise melodic movement, 'circular' a circular bow movement, and 'moving' a fast run of notes. In this way the dance 'code' is sonified to produce a strange gestural music, that has the resonance of a traditional music of sorts. Furthermore, each gesture is synchronised to its description as projected in the video. The reinforcing of the movement gesture by the sound gesture, gives a clear coherence to what is being heard and described, but also underlines the fact that what is being described is never truly visualised. The visual becomes the imaginative gap, that the mind must re-imagine using words and music.

The Musicians of Dourgouti

The Musicians of Dourgouti for violin, viola, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, piano, marimba, sound media and text-film (15′) was commissioned by Ensemble Artefacts as part of their project: *Music for a New World*. It was premiered at Stegi, Athens, on the 26ᵗʰ of May 2017.[117]
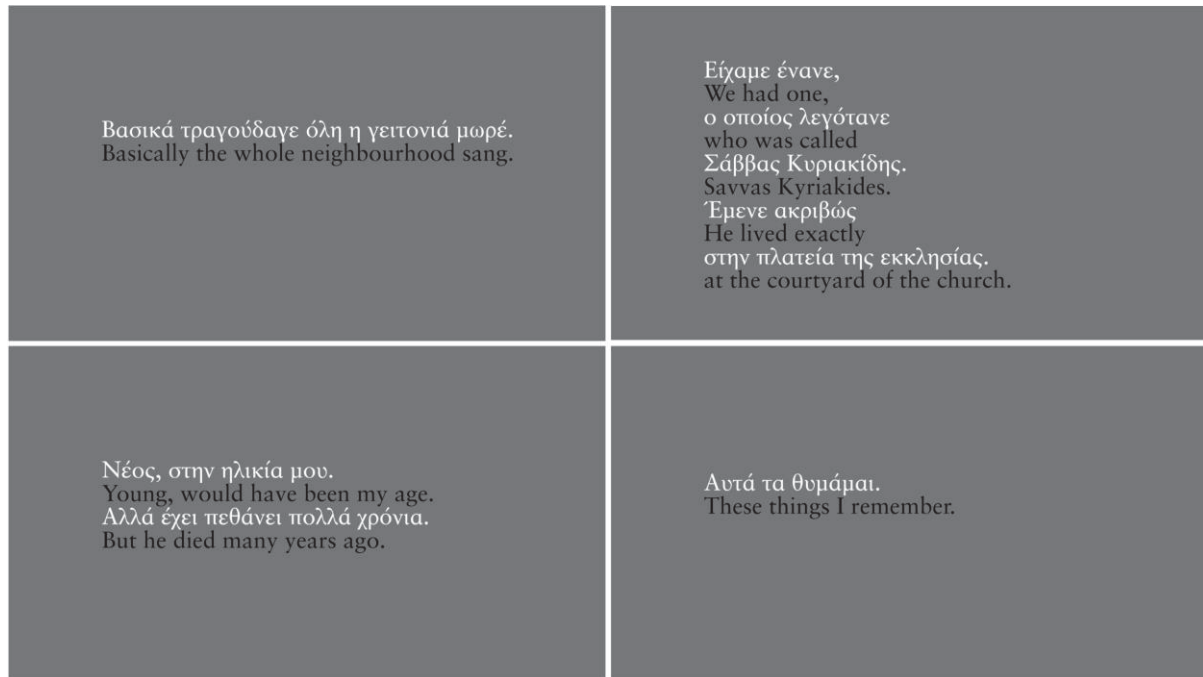
Figure 96 Screenshots from *The Musicians of Dourgouti.*

The Musicians of Dourgouti is based on a transcription of an interview recorded by George Sachinis (UrbanDig Project) of Iosif Gevontian, a resident of the Dourgouti neighborhoud of Neos Kosmos, Athens. In the interview, which begins with Gevontian singing a famous old Turkish song, *Bekledim De Gelmedim* by Yesari Asım Arsoy, he gives an account of the musical life and the many musicians, which he encountered from the 1950's onwards, while living in Dourgouti. He gives an insight into the multicultural life, and the role that music played in the everyday life of the area.

Gevontian's speaking voice, though never heard directly, is translated into the musical material of the composition. The voice is slowed down by a factor of about 1.5, and then mapped freely onto pitches and sounds of the ensemble. This is not done algorithmically, but rather manually, in order to retain some control of the

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[117] Link to performance by ARTéfacts ensemble, Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, 26.05.17: https://vimeo.com/243447463

pitch and harmony. There is a polyphonic approach to the manner in which the music is arranged, each instrument contributing to the build up of harmony and sound mass. The freedom in the approach of the translation of speech to melody also enables a more unpredictable and expressive steering of the musical phrases, exploring register and timbral variations in the evolution of the narration.

The narrative is largely made up of the naming of musicians that were active in the neighbourhood at the time. Gevontian talks about the importance of the participation of the neighbourhood in musical expression through the songs, which also kept the cultural identity of the various ethnic groups alive, specifically the Armenian identity.

> We had another one, Koumbonis. Lived exactly opposite my house, he played clarinet.
> Mr. Kostas. There was again another, Armenian, Mishak who played clarinet.
> There was the coal man who played ud. I remember, when it was my father's birthday they came to our house and we played. Clarinet, ud. It was crazy! crazy...

As the ensemble 'speaks', the words are projected in time with the music, in Greek with translation into English. The manner of display is kept as simple as possible. The words are grouped in phrases, and built up from one to five lines, remaining on the screen until the next utterance. The musical phrases become visually grouped on the screen in a transparent way, that enables the listener to construct a mental overview of the phrases that have just been heard. Because the text is built up from an oral interview, in which the interviewee is trying to remember names and stories from the past, there is a hesitant and unsure nature permeating the narrative. Names are repeated, order is muddled, some sentences remain unfinished.

Adding to Gevontian's own rendition of *Bekledim De Gelmedim*, we hear fragments of three other recordings of this song, by Zeki Müren, Nevin Demirdöven and Stelios Kazantzidis (alluded to in the text). These are also used in the fabric of the frozen voices heard in the background of the piece. All these renditions are time stretched throughout the piece and filtered into different ranges, which evolve over time, providing a harmonic backdrop to the melodic contours created by the ensemble. This reinforces a 'figure and ground' perspective, and like in many of my pieces, where the electronics provide some kind of background for the instrumental foreground, it is unstable and volatile, and has the potential (which is realised a few times in this piece) to overwhelm the acoustic instruments, and flip the perspective around.

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Links to Online Media of Music-Text-Film

(In order of appearance in thesis)

Introduction

Words and Song Without Words:
Recording by Francesco Dillon: https://vimeo.com/54731855
Performance by Karolina Öhman:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4dT7WPfoOs
Performance by Larissa Groeneveld:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7J94yFpFaQ

Chapter 3

Subliminal: The Lucretian Picnic
Performed by ASKO|Schoenberg: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJDc-gBb9rQ

Chapter 5

Dreams of the Blind
Performed by Ensemble MAE: https://vimeo.com/226624063
Mnemonist S
Performed by ASKO|Schoenberg**:** https://vimeo.com/13766483
Memoryscape
Performed by MusikFabrik: https://vimeo.com/226623184

Chapter 6

Machine Read
http://tijdschriftterras.nl/a-reflection-ideas-dick-raaijmakers/

Chapter 7

Wordless
Complete Suite: https://youtu.be/UHg6-hEn8Ms
Varosha
Video with recording from Resorts and Ruins CD: https://vimeo.com/192369559
Der Komponist
Live audio recording from premiere performance by Philarmonie Zuidnederland,
conducted by Bas Wiegers: https://soundcloud.com/yannisky/der-komponist-for-orchestra-an-electronics

Chapter 8

Karaoke Etudes
Video scores only:
https://vimeo.com/191127009
Performed by Thin Edge New Music Collective and Ensemble Paramirabo:
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEPaAtrnZag
Performed by Seattle Chamber Players:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0T6DVhyedw
Trench Code
Performed by MAZE: https://vimeo.com/226869061
Oneiricon
Performed by MAZE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GroHLc9QXTk
iOS app at App Store: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oneiricon/id1293741939?mt=8

Appendix

Scam Spam
Performance by Takao Hyakutome: https://vimeo.com/39011042
QFO
http://earreader.nl/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/kyriakides.html
Adobe 'Flash' is needed, so this might not work on Apple smartphones and tablets.
RE: Mad Masters
Performance by Barbara Lüneburg: https://vimeo.com/225816862
The Arrest
Performance by Ensemble MAE: https://vimeo.com/14960327
Circadian Surveillance
Performed by The Electronic Hammer: https://vimeo.com/202900842
Nerve
Performance by the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra:
https://youtu.be/4KkveuhKv9o
Music for Anemic Cinema
Computer realisation: https://vimeo.com/105759772
The Musicians of Dourgouti
Performance by ARTéfacts ensemble: https://vimeo.com/243447463