

FRITZ HAUSER

LABORATORIO

SOLO PERCUSSION

FRITZ HAUSER: DRUMS & SPACE

Music is often described as an art of time – implying that space has a minimal role to play. Thus Stravinsky commented that “music is a chronologic art as painting is a spatial art”, while for Schopenhauer; “music is perceived... in and through time alone, with absolute exclusion of space”. Schopenhauer is the great philosopher who devoted the most attention to music, but on this question he was wrong. Perception of music doesn't exclude space – as Fritz Hauser's album, with its spatial, architectural inspiration, reminds us. As Hauser comments, “The correlation between space and sound has always been a driving force in my music”.

Nonetheless, the idea of music as a non-spatial “art of tones” has a powerful hold on the musical imagination. Hence the acousmatic thesis, which says – according to Roger Scruton in The Aesthetics of Music – that music liberates sounds from their worldly source, allowing us to experience them as free from the gravitational pull of their causal origin. As Edward Lippman writes: “Hearing is satisfied with its own objects, and has no need to relate them to further objects and events of the outside world”. What remains in musical experience is its non-worldly or musical cause or rationale – a non-spatial art of tones.

Scruton and Lippman are right, insofar as spatial experience has a subsidiary artistic role in most music. While traditional concert music involves the construction of a soundstage—for instance through orchestral layout—this process is not a means of artistic expression. It aims simply at clarity and balance, not exploitation of spatial effects – just as the rectangular cinema screen is a norm, so it's only divergences from it that are artistically expressive.

Music varies in its avoidance of localisable sound. The sound of a well-blended cathedral choir seems to come

from no precise location – the listener is immersed in sound. Readily localisable sound, in contrast, contains a wide frequency range. Researchers at Leeds University discovered that traditional pure-toned ambulance and police sirens give poor directional cues; to optimise these cues, allowing other drivers and pedestrians to react more quickly to emergency vehicles, bursts of broadband noise should be added.

It is true that one can appreciate how musicians respond to a room's acoustic, adjusting their performance to its idiosyncrasies – an appreciation that is non-acousmatic. But, to reiterate, music that plays artistically with space has been an exception. Baroque antiphonal music, and 19th century compositions with off-stage musicians, aimed at spatial effects through placement of groups of performers. Charles Ives developed this approach, which became central to contemporary composition with Stockhausen's Gruppen and Carré. Sonic landscape is integral to the work of electro-acoustic composers such as Jonathan Harvey and Trevor Wishart.

It's an approach also found in Fritz Hauser's solo percussion album, inspired by working with students of Miller/Maranta Architects, at Mendrisio's Accademia di Architettura: “Twelve teams of students were confronted with a short piece of my music, and individually created first impressions”, he explains. “Then we all met at my house in Italy, and exchanged ideas about a fictitious Percussion Centre, designed by the teams”. Hauser then turned this inspiring dialogue around, creating percussion music for spaces and outdoor situations.

This music cannot be played live by one single person. However, he explains, “I wanted to be a soloist and an ensemble at the same time, musically inhabiting different

positions in an imaginative building". The results are "mostly multi-track compositions, layers of sounds, and rhythms – music for spaces that do not (yet) exist".

Percussion instruments offer contrasting possibilities of activating space, Hauser continues: "A woodblock clearly defines the reflections and the reverb of its surroundings, while a cymbal – unless stopped – lingers in the air as a sound-field without defined borders". Placing these effects within a wide dynamic range, Hauser created multi-layered sound experiences, using multi-track mixing to "bend" spaces together. Thus the temple block sounds in "Laboratorio DUE" were dynamically too far apart to be recorded simultaneously: "One player would have to play the soft temple blocks very close to the microphone, the other would play the loud ones far back in the room. But then, the distant temple blocks would have no clear attack. With this multi-track recording I 'bend' two rooms together – an interesting result that, amazingly enough, sounds quite natural". In a technique reminiscent of Trevor Wishart's creative sonic landscapes, the soft rubbing and clear attacks appear to inhabit the same room. In "Laboratorio TRE", the layers of Hauser's voice form a kind of choir, fading with the sustain of a large tam-tam.

Hauser stresses the importance of spatial experience in music:

Especially live, it makes all the difference for a listener. Our acoustic awareness of space is usually only activated by extremes: a tunnel, a church. But it's the little differences from room to room that make us feel alive. As a percussionist who performs using all his limbs, he's always liked polyphony: "It's less the playing of several rhythms at the same time, more the melding of one soundworld into another, changing the angle of perception with layers of sound and dynamics".

I'll conclude with one final aspect of Hauser's work – its tight and meticulous control, which I first experienced on Franz Koglmann's early Hat Hut recordings. In response to the aesthetic imperfectionism advocated by Tony Buck of The Necks, who plays the kit provided, Hauser comments:

Travelling with just a stick bag is a beautiful thing – it makes you feel like a singer! It's called JWA: Just Walk Away. You don't have to worry about schlepping gear, you just walk in and use what's there. But what's there is usually no big fun, so the price is high – you can get as frustrated as a piano player used to Steinways, who has to put up with an upright piano out of tune.

"You might be better off to use a table and a chair and some dishes instead of malfunctioning drums that will frustrate you", he adds. "As Picasso said: If I don't have red, I use blue!"

Chance has its virtues, therefore. For instance, Hauser hadn't used the huge bass drum in LABORATORIO in many years: "I unpacked it, attached the pedal, and it sounded like a big beautiful daisy. A good bass drum sound really makes your day as a drummer!" That sound is one of the delights of this amazingly varied percussion ensemble recording – all of it performed by one musician.

Andy Hamilton

FRITZ HAUSER LABORATORIO:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATION OF ARCHITECTURE AND MUSIC

The task of the architect is to create built form that is suitable for human beings to live their lives. It is a socially informed process meant to insure that the conditions essential to human life are created using architectural means. Thus culture is projected onto concrete space: urban planning and architecture are the built reflection of our ways of living within a territory.

When this activity goes beyond merely satisfying our elementary needs and seeks to conceive relevant form and expression, building takes on a higher meaning: it is no longer merely construction, it becomes architecture.

When considering the didactic aspects of this profession it can be helpful to look at related phenomena of human creation, for instance music. Both disciplines can instill different moods within us, they affect our senses and stimulate the imagination. Because they relate to us as a community, they are part of the collective experience and construct our identity.

However, the two disciplines are also immensely dissimilar. Whereas music takes place in time and is as a sensory perception ephemeral, that is, it exists in the moment of its unfolding, architecture resists time and is settlement in the physical sense. Music is perceived in the moment, while architecture can be revisited again and again – we can linger and let it speak to us repeatedly. Architecture is an artefact of its time, its reproduction would be a spiritless copy lacking in social foundations. A musical composition is also a product of a given zeitgeist and is closely interwoven with the era of its creation. But its interpretation can free itself from these restraints – providing a piece of music with a unique shape depends upon the performer.

A direct comparison of music and architecture fails to produce a useful result. And architecture is certainly not frozen music, as is often erroneously stated. The two fields are interrelated, but in a different manner: the transitory art of music requires a spatial framework, a suitable character and an appropriate mise-en-scène to unfold and reach the audience. These necessities inspire a space in proportions, material and light: at a given site, a specific architecture is created for a certain purpose. Architecture is the instrument that envelops the music and, as its counterpart, accompanies and enhances it and renders it perceptible.

The “LABORATORIO Fritz Hauser” experiment is a thorough examination of sound and space. However, it is not an ordinary constellation of sounds in an extant space, but rather it takes the mutual inspiration of the two disciplines as a starting point for the investigation. The designed spaces are the results of an examination of Fritz Hauser’s music and his vision of an environment that allows someone to create and teach this kind of music. These fictitious LABORATORIO, in turn, inspired this collection of percussion pieces. An interplay of architecture and music in the abstract space of sound: architecture as *promenade musicale*.

Quintus Miller

Translated by Friederike Kulcsar

Thank you! Whether this is your first recording from Hat Hut Records, or your Xth, we want you to know how proud we are to have you as a member of our growing, world-wide community of listeners. We hope that you enjoy this recording, it represents our constant aim to bring you the music of the future to discover. What you hear is what you hear!

Werner X. Uehlinger

The correlation between space and sound has always been a driving force in my music. This recording is based on a project with architecture students, involving a fictitious percussion centre. The resulting ideas inspired me to compose music for spaces that do not (yet) exist - percussion sounds that reflect mainly the architecture of my mind. Enjoy! *Fritz Hauser*

La corrélation entre l'espace et le son a toujours joué un rôle moteur dans ma musique. Cet enregistrement est basé sur un projet avec des étudiants en architecture englobant un centre de percussions imaginaire. Les idées ainsi trouvées m'ont inspiré à composer de la musique pour des espaces qui n'existent pas (encore) – des sonorités percussives reflétant principalement l'architecture de mon esprit. Bonne découverte ! *Fritz Hauser, translated by Benjamin Mouliets*

FRITZ HAUSER LABORATORIO SOLO PERCUSSION

uno 16:05

ISRC CH 130.1800840

due 5:22

ISRC CH 130.1800841

tre 6:43

ISRC CH 130.1800842

quatro 5:41

ISRC CH 130.1800843

cinque 14:10

ISRC CH 130.1800844

sei 12:36

ISRC CH 130.1800845

Total Time 60:41

DDD *24*
Bit

All compositions by Fritz Hauser, Tuhtah Publishing SUISA.

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Fritz Hauser plays Zildjian cymbals
www.fritzhauser.ch

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