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Description of Zeitraum

Zeitraum (German for 'time interval', literally also 'time space') is a sound environment created in the context of the FWF-funded artistic research project "The Choreography of Sound". The project explored questions of space in electroacoustic music and sound art, approaching them through the practices of composition, choreography, and installation art. As one of the central results of the project, Zeitraum exposes the interrelation of time and space in acoustic communication. The environment is composed of many identical sound sources dispersed irregularly in a large space, playing an aleatoric ostinato of percussive sounds. When listened to from a particular location (the "sweet spot"), the pattern is perceived as an accented but isochronous pulse. The ostinato is structured such that the sounds from all sources arrive with the same delay at the sweet spot, compensating for the differences in propagation time. When walking away from the sweet spot, the regular pulse gets more and more distorted as the distances to all sound sources change and with them the propagation delays from the sources to the listener. What starts as almost imperceptible deviations and passes through various areas with different kinds of grooves, ends up in a rhythmically completely disrupted and apparently chaotic sequence of events when listened to from far off the sweet spot. By moving about the space, the audience explores a space literally made out of time, a time space – a bewildering experience enacted through one's locomotion, revealing the always baffling relativity of observation. Zeitraum emerged from research on 'space filling sound textures', an approach I developed in my sound art practice during the last decade. The work is a distillate from several case studies I performed in the context of the project. It represents what I consider to be the archetype of a space filling sound texture. In its enigmatic sonic appearance, an aesthetic formulation of some of the essential constraints shaping the composition of spatially distributed sound textures has been found, touching upon fundamental conceptual and artistic conditions of possibility in electroacoustic music composition and sound art.

Link to conference questions

Zeitraum has been created explicitly with the intention to function as an artwork communicating research results through aesthetic experience. Exploring this possibility was part of the project's methodological quest. Instead of words, Zeitraum uses sounds and the movements of the listeners to make the argument. It creates a situation in which the audience is provoked to combine their aesthetic and epistemic strategies in making sense of the work. Confronting the audience with a puzzle about what they hear as a function of their listening position also provokes communication among the listeners – a feature specifically afforded by the sonic properties of the work. Not only to students and peers (such as composers and sound artists) but also to other musicians and the general audience, Zeitraum offers the possibility of making a key experience conceivably pertinent for anyone pursuing a sound based artistic practice. Furthermore, an online audio-visual model of the ideas structuring Zeitraum allows for an interactive exploration of the work, developing it further and applying the concepts it embodies in one's own practice. In this sense Zeitraum is hoped to transform our experience and understanding of music.