

## ***Blowdruk: the transition from multimodal score interpretation to improvised audio-visual electro-acoustic chamber music***

Blowdruk is a collaboration between musician and artistic researcher Vincent Caers and visual artist Sigrid Tanghe. The collaboration is part of the Ph.D. project 'Living Scores (LS) Live', which aims at critically evaluating the trajectory from learning a contemporary composition to performing it in an interdisciplinary context. On the one hand, LS Live seeks to reinforce experiencing a performance of contemporary percussion compositions by creating interdisciplinary interpretations. On the other hand, LS Live proposes new formats for contemporary percussion performance based on skills and knowledge learned by studying the repertoire.

At the start of their collaboration, Sigrid and Vincent worked on the multimodal interpretation of 'Loops II' by French composer Philippe Hurel. This composition is characterized by a strong tension between the fast and quasi-repetitive movement on the micro-level and the slow continuous transformations on the meso- and macro-level, a result of the synthesis between spectral music's continuous transformation and classical variation techniques<sup>1</sup>. But while this multi-layered character is clearly applied when performing the composition, empirical feedback reveals it is often absent in the experience of its performance. According to Margulis repeated exposure triggers an attentional shift from more local to more global levels of musical organization<sup>2</sup>. But for most listeners the concert is their first encounter with the music, so they tend to focus on the micro-level and thus risk missing the composition's fundamental feature. The aim of the audio-visual interpretation was to bring this multi-layered tension more clearly into the performance by embedding the slow evolution on the macro-levels into a visual process and confronting it with the micro-level, clearly present in the music.

In order to explore the loops-process more thoroughly, the focus shifted from performing the composition to a more improvised approach in both media. But fascinating as it is to perform the loops-process in composed music, it appeared to be unsuited for convincingly integrating it into acoustical improvisation. This is in line with theory of cognitive load: our long-term memory is capable of storing processed material but working memory can only hold information from the sensory input for a short time span and only processes a few pieces of material at any one time<sup>3</sup>. This makes it highly difficult to retain and recall a stack of improvised transformations on the fly. In order to overcome this limitation, the *lsl.lpsr* software has been created, implementing the peculiarities of the loops-process in a digital improvisation tool<sup>4</sup>. This allows for applying- aspects of - the loops-process, as well as other compositional processes based on contemporary percussion repertoire, in electro-acoustic improvisation on percussion. The combination of *lsl.lpsr* and live percussion has been the musical foundation for further exploring audio-visual electro-acoustic chamber music as a new performance format in LS Live. The proposed performance shows the current state of this explorative trajectory and will be discussed in the light of contemporary theories on multimedia performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Cock, T. De, Caers, V., & Buys, K. Van Den. (2015). An Examination of Philippe Hurel's "Loops II." *Percussive Notes*, 3(May), 44-48.

<sup>2</sup> Margulis, E. H. (2014). *On Repeat: How Music Plays The Mind* (eBook). New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Sorden, S. D. (2012). The cognitive theory of multimedia learning. In *Handbook of Educational Theories* (pp. 1-31).

<sup>4</sup> Caers, V. (2018). *lsl . lpsr* : applying contemporary compositional processes into an electro-acoustic improvisation tool. In *Proceedings of the 2018 International Computer Music Conference* (pp. 69-73). San Fransisco, California: The International Computer Music Association.

Fragments of Blowdruk-sessions can be found on <https://vimeo.com/album/5506854>. A full performance is available on <https://vimeo.com/album/5506854/video/296944486>.



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*Vincent Caers is percussionist and electronic musician. His main interest lies in interdisciplinary projects combining percussion, live electronics and visual arts. As an artistic researcher, he explores new formats for contemporary percussion performance and their impact on the audience's experience. Vincent obtained master degrees in percussion, chamber music and contemporary music performance before becoming research assistant at the LUCA School of Arts. He also obtained degrees in Cultural Management at the Antwerp Management School and electronic music at Ircam and Berklee College of Music. He regularly performs as percussionist, improviser and freelance musician with different ensembles and orchestras.*



**Sigrid Tanghe**

*Sigrid Tanghe is visual artist and performer, in interaction with musicians and dancers. In her work, the finished painting is no longer her focus, but replaced by the action of painting, creating a continuous flow of form and color, allowing all performers to develop their voice. She considers the movement-sound connection in music equal to the movement-form connection in visual arts; powerful movement resulting in powerful form. Drawing provides a movement a longer sustain. Power one can shape into form and color or into sound, witnessing the creative moment, making whatever was in the movement concrete on paper. After all, music and drawing are just other ways to transform movement into a significant artistic statement. What you hear is what you see.*