

## **Sound as Score (SaS) - Abstract**

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What are sound scores? Which composers around the world work with audio scores? What methods do these composers develop? How does the interpretation of audio scores differ from written notation? What new skills do composers have to acquire and what new questions do they have to deal with in order to compose with audio scores? What can psychoacoustics contribute to clarifying these questions and how does the concept of mimesis (imitation) relate to the aesthetic analysis and evaluation of audio scores?

The aim of the project Sound as Score (SaS) is to provide insight into the specifications of composing, interpreting and evaluating audio scores as well as implementing them into the common canon of compositional techniques. In order to build a strong foundation for the emerging methodology of audio scores, the project links the artistic creation and analysis of audio scores, the scientific examination of the psychoacoustic impact on the interpretation of audio scores by the professional musician and the musicological questioning in the field of reception aesthetics.

In his paper "Elaborate Audio Scores" Sandeep Bhagwati describes "the conveyance modes unique to audio scores; it touches on questions of control and context in elaborate audio scores, including on the question of whether such audio scores must necessarily be improvisation scores; it details how, in the context of elaborate audio scores, the terms 'practicing' and 'rehearsal' describe other kinds of activities than they do in the context of visual scores; and it discusses unique problems of timing in the performance and composition of elaborate audio scores."

In studies about the perception of hearing, one distinguishes between universals, in other words innate, culturally independent attributes, and attributes which go along with conscious hearing and are connected with personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. This research primarily deals with conscious hearing and addresses a very specific target group: the professional musician. If sound is the score's medium, this establishes a wide field for research on the subject of interpretation and the aesthetics of perception. Helga de la Motte-Haber asks whether an aesthetics of perception in musicology really exists because in addition to the analysis of the compositions it would also have to focus on the listeners.

SaS is explicitly dedicated to the listeners. It questions the actors, musicians and composers, who are called upon to make aesthetic decisions every millisecond during the creative process, and in addition, it is a challenge for the audience and musicologists, the former who will also be obliged to question its listening habits, the latter, their research methods respectively.

In the last two decades, musicological studies focused more and more on listening as a novel subject of research, which was examined from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives. In

addition, the interest in different forms of notation and musical writing grew considerably in the international scene. As far as novel technologies are concerned, questions of perception were raised in the fields of sound studies, electroacoustic, acousmatic or computer music. Astonishingly, there is still a lack of research concerning the use of audio scores and its impact on live performance.

With the rising interest in listening and perception, an aesthetic debate stemming from the 1930s has once again gained importance: the discussion between Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno on aesthetic experience based on Benjamin's article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". This interest was additionally raised by scholarly research dedicated to Adorno's notes on a "Theory of Musical Reproduction," which were written mostly in the 1950s and remained unpublished during his lifetime. Today, with advanced technological progress altering artistic practice rapidly, key questions from this encounter of Benjamin and Adorno can still be regarded as highly relevant, or in some respects even more urgent than in former days.

By linking the topic to the aesthetic debate on experience, the SaS musicological part will focus on the innovative potential of the artistic approach using audio scores. The goal is to explore the impact of this novel artistic conception on the composers, on the musicians who interpret it by listening instead of reading and on the audience who listens to the performance. By discussing aesthetic concepts such as mimesis, artistic behavior, expression or embodiment etc., which we will explore and adapt to the project's artistic setting, we will develop an analytical method that is able to deal with these innovative artistic procedures adequately. The musicological research departs from an aesthetic viewpoint that focuses on the act of listening which is at the center of the interpretation.

The leading hypothesis is that the specific attitude of listening demanded by the composer/performer and the musicians comprises a "mimetic dimension", a specific way of imitation (mimesis), which is relevant for the piece's novel character and constitutive for its specific impact on the audience. In order to evaluate this hypothesis, the musicological research will deal with the following questions: Is the aesthetic experience altered by the use of audio scores? Which differences can be observed in the individual perception of the musicians, the composer / performer, and the audience? What is the impact of using audio scores on the notion of the work? How is the effect on a potentially wordless, but decipherable "sense" that might be transmitted by the music? Is the perception of the piece's form altered in this setting in comparison to works using a traditional score? Which elements are crucial for the success of a performance? How is success defined in this context by the different parties involved? How does this altered setting affect traditional role models, hierarchies, or other unspoken norms and rules in today's music business? And, as a consequence, might there even be a political impact reaching beyond the purely artistic sphere?

By intertwining musicological and aesthetic questions with experimental artistic procedures and vice versa, the project is developing a fruitful and critical relationship between musicological research and artistic practice that allows, on the one hand, the necessary distance for critical evaluation and, on the other hand, enough nearness to develop an enriching encounter of theoretical and artistic concerns. Since listening demands a specific attitude and behavior, the explored artistic concerns touch an ethic dimension that might even reach beyond the scientific and purely artistic spheres, and thus might have an impact on urgent political and social debates.