

Workshop on Body Percussion and Live-Electronics

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Abstract. *This workshop focuses on the artistic perspectives of Nyokabi Kariuki, a composer and performer from Nairobi, Kenya, who uses voice and body percussion to explore the complexities of post-colonial African identity, and Alex Hofmann, a live-electronics performer and researcher investigating questions of live-electronic performance preparation strategies. The workshop encourages participants to actively explore body percussion playing techniques and to develop new concepts for combining body percussion with live-electronics considering approaches from the field of ubiquitous music.*

1. Workshop Description

Within the umbrella of the Ubiquitous Music (Keller et al. 2023), specifically related to embodied and ecological approaches to music practices, during this workshop the topic of Body Percussion and Live-Electronics will be explored from multiple perspectives: First, from the artistic perspective of composer and performer Nyokabi Kariuki from Nairobi, Kenya, who is currently working on a longform experimental sound work that will serve as her exploration of the complexities of post-colonial African identity. In this work, she centers herself as a performer on voice and body percussion, the latter of which plays a vibrant role in various folk musical traditions across Africa. Second, from the perspective of live-electronics performer and researcher Alex Hofmann, who is investigating questions of live-electronic performance preparation strategies. Kariuki and Hofmann are currently exploring the intersections of their respective research. During the workshop, they will demonstrate some of the music created under this collaboration; where live-electronics are used in conversation with the body, exploring the way the body's sound can be understood, enhanced, and disrupted (see video link in Section 3).

Workshop participants will be invited to actively explore body percussion playing techniques during the workshop and are encouraged to develop and discuss new concepts for combining body percussion with live-electronics. This will concern questions such as: Which role can live-electronics play in a body percussion performance? How can a body percussion performer control the live-electronics? What types of DIY sensors and open-source software tools are applicable? Which restrictions need to be considered when combining body percussion with electronics? How to develop live-electronic performances for a larger ensemble of body percussion performers? Furthermore, the presenters would like to ignite some conceptual discussion about our relationship to our body as sound makers. Can using our body as a vessel of sound help us become more

attuned to ourselves? What can we learn from the African musical traditions from which these movements are borrowed?

2. CVs of Workshop Presenters

Nyokabi Kariūki is a Kenyan composer and sound artist based between Kenya and the United States. Her sonic imagination is ever-evolving, spanning across genres from classical contemporary and experimental-electronic music, to sound art, pop, film, and (East) African musical traditions. She performs with the piano, voice, electronics, and on several instruments from the African continent. Her concert works have been performed by notable ensembles such as Cello Octet Amsterdam and Third Coast Percussion, and she has received commissions from BBC Radio 3, Heartland Marimba, and more. Released in February 2022, her debut EP, ‘peace places: kenyan memories’ (SA Recordings) was described as “deft” (The Quietus) and “transcendent” (The Guardian), with Bandcamp highlighting seeing her as “becoming a crucial voice in contemporary composition and experimental music”. Nyokabi seeks to create meaningful and challenging art, illuminated by a commitment to the preservation and reflection on African thought, language and stories. Website: <https://www.nkariuki.com/>

Alex Hofmann is a professor at the Department of Music Acoustics (IWK) at mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, a sound artist and a saxophone / live-electronics performer. He investigates tools and methods to enhance expressiveness in music performance by advancing creative music technologies.

Website: <https://iwk.mdw.ac.at/hofmann/>

3. Related Video Material

“Experiments on Body Percussion and Live-Electronics (Helsinki 2023)”, by Nyokabi Kariūki and Alex Hofmann: <https://youtu.be/S1haP9iRZkY?si=rLnSb18-bvh9516f>

“Questions on the Origins of Creativity,” by Nyokabi Kariūki: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOw59jIHqPo>

4. Funding

This research was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): AR-743

References / Related Literature

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