

Converging Objects

A workshop for musicians who improvise and use live electronics

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This workshop is meant for

- acoustic musicians who improvise and use live electronics in their own setups,
- those who play with other musicians using electronics, or
- electronic musicians who improvise and work with acoustic players.

As we proceed into the second decade of the 21st century we as composer/performers divide our time between conjuring up concepts, structures and scores and showing up on stage to play. We thrive on a precarious balance between creating and performing new works. That is not to say that we participate in every piece we make. But it does imply that the basis of our creative work is intimately tied to our individual playing, our instrument and our unique performing histories.

A significant number of composer/musicians is actively seeking for ways to use technology as an intimate and/or integrated partner for their acoustic instruments – some even design and build their own hybrid or purely electronic instruments. Their inspiration most often has its roots in their instruments and how they play them. It's how they use their own bag of tricks: their talents, artistic passions, unique virtuosity, conceptual twists. And how they depend on their highly developed and unmistakable personal voices as performers. And last but not least, how they engage and integrate their bodies as real-time creative forces. That includes every body part, from their inner ears to their tapping feet. This real-time kinesthetically and intellectually driven music making lends itself well to improvisation as a handy tool in their work. Improvisation provides room for them to experiment and develop both as composers and as performers. And, considering the state of affairs in music technology, improvisation continues to be at the forefront as the favored performance mode. Interfaces, hardware vs. software, analog vs. digital and dealing with communication codes are still up and running issues for us all.

The Converging Objects workshop is a two-day hands-on workshop that will deal with these issues. We will introduce some ideas and concepts, the participants will play their instruments and together we will work on improvising skills as well as developing approaches to using live electronics. We will try to cater the workshop to the needs of the participants as much as possible.

Practical issues

We assume all participants bring some kind of playable instrument, whether this is acoustic, electronic or a mixture. When you register for the workshop, please indicate what acoustic instrument you are playing and/or what hardware and software you use in your setup.

Please also give us an indication about your experience with music technology and your improvisation skills. The level of knowledge in electronics can be anything between just simply amplifying yourself to using sophisticated computer programs such as Max/MSP, Pure Data, Ableton Live and SuperCollider. The level of improvisation experience can be anything from none at all to having a career built around it.

A tentative schedule:

Day 1

Introduction

A brief history of live electronics, past and current. This will give the beginners some ideas as to how they would like to proceed and it will give the more experienced musicians material to articulate and evaluate why they have chosen the equipment they currently use.

Individual setups

Both the teachers and the participants will briefly describe their own setup and performance style. Beginners will be encouraged to talk about what they would like to use or to sound like.

Play!

Participants will play in various combinations, after which we will discuss what went on. Subgroups will be formed for the final presentation on the second day.

Day 2

Improvising with electronics

Discussing musical and instrumental gestures and how to control them technically, musical ideas that leave room for the electronics and vice versa, strategies for live sampling, communication with an ensemble while dealing with one's own improvisational ideas and one's own electronic setup.

Play!

The formed subgroups will have time to work on a performance for the evening. The workshop will end in a performance/presentation by the participants.

In our duo Shackle we have created a set of guided improvisation compositions that are very well suited for a group of participants to play. We will work on a free improvisation and on a guided improvisation.