

Comforting Music #2
for two marimbas, VR glasses, live-electronics & video

to Dalbergia Duo

The starting point for the percussionists activities is a 3D film score. Known from classical scores, but also historical graphical scores, thinking with a graphic symbol as an element to which more or less specific musical actions are assigned is replaced by a three-dimensional space surrounding both performers.

The composed stimuli affecting eyesight are designed to introduce the performers into a specific emotional state and at the same time relate to a specific sound matter, characterised in the introduction to the score. During the performance, both percussionists watch the 3D film score through VR glasses in order to increase the participation dimension in specific situations appearing in the 3D video file. The film is a composed sequence of fictionalised images, processes and situations depicting the non-concert life of the performers, which shapes them as an artists.

In addition to the 3D score – visible only to the percussionists – the piece also features an independent video layer, watched by the audience. It coincides with the score of the percussionists but is never a direct copy of it. The audience can watch it on a huge screen placed on the stage.

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Instruments & media

mar. 1 – marimba 1

mar. 2 – marimba 2

electr. – live-electronics & video

Duration

9:50 min.

Amplification

Both instruments must be amplified.

Stage & concert venue setup

Two marimbas are set in the central part of an empty stage with a huge – not smaller, than 8 x 4.5m – screen set behind the instrument in 16:9 ratio.

Four speakers are set around the audience (1/2: front [LF + RF], 3/4: rear [LR + RR], with good bass or with additional subwoofer) plus an extra monitor speakers for the percussionists.

Performing materials

All performing materials (score, video files, as well as the Ableton Live 11 project) are available at the following link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/c2mtxl8kmchajbl/AAC1L-MveqZr6jszkLNEMcYra?dl=0>

Technical rider

- 1x computer with SSD, at least 16 GB RAM and Ableton Live 11 Suite (→live-electronics, video);
- 2x VR glasses and a smartphone (→with copied score/3D video-file)*;
- audio interface with 2 inputs and 4 outputs (IN: 01-02 – marimba 1/2 ; OUT: 01-02 – live-electr. front; 03-04 – live-electr. rear**;
- 4x speaker with good bass, preferably with additional one subwoofer; set around the audience (LF/RF & LR/RR) as well as a monitor speakers on stage;
- digital mixing desk;
- condenser microphones for the amplification of two marimbas;

- bright HD video projector (min. 10000 ANSI Lumen);
- big screen for the front video projection (16x9 ratio), set behind the piano and not smaller than 8 x 4.5 m (a flat-surfaced wall can be also considered for video projection);
- stage lights;

*A very basic/cheap VR glasses are required for the performance — allowing putting a mobile phone inside and watching a 3D movie through two lenses. If possible, pick up as neutral — in terms of colouristic & design — as possible (black, etc.). Eg.: <https://www.conrad.com/p/braun-germany-b-vr-360-black-silver-vr-glasses-1486099> (in Poland eg. <https://www.morele.net/box-2-0-1302950/>).

**An audio signal from microphones amplifying marimbas should be sent from a mixing desk as a mono signal from an AUX output to the audio interface & computer. Plugging microphones directly into an audio interface & computer won't give such flexibility in achieving the proper balance between the instruments clean & processed sound. However, in the case of performing the piece in venues without an appropriate technical background, one can consider it as a simplified solution.

In the case of problems/questions please contact the composer:

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Time structure of the piece

The structure of the piece is constant over time and determined by a) a prepared 3D video file (percussionists score), b) a video file visible to the audience and an automated session in Ableton Live (triggering live-electronics layer of the piece, triggering video file visible to the audience).

The piece consists of an **Introduction fragment** (no sound/playing, performers put on their VR glasses) and **10 segments (A-B-C ... J)** in which the percussionists play on their instruments. Additionally, the table below lists the timing indication of the moments when a classically notated score appears in the 3D video score. It is a signal for the performers to start a new segment and at the same time indication for improvising on a particular material in segments A1-B1-C1...J1.

time	segment	score in VR glasses	improvised segment	remarks
00:00	INTRODUCTION			no playing, VR glasses & video-score preparations
00:15	A	X		performer starts to play
	A1		X	
01:15	B	X		
	B1		X	
02:05	C	X		
	C1		X	
03:10	D	X		
	D1		X	
03:50	E	X		
	E1		X	
04:20	F	X		
	F1		X	
05:30	G	X		
	G1		X	
06:50	H	X		
	H1		X	
07:30	I	X		
	I1		X	
08:30	J	X		
	J1		X	
09:50	END			end of the piece

The beginning of the piece (synchronisation of all layers)

The piece is performed without a click track. However, there're 4 layers that are strictly composed in time within the piece: (1.) video 3D score for the 1st percussionist, (2.) video 3D score for the 2nd percussionist, (3.) video visible to the audience [within Ableton Live session], (4.) automated Ableton Live session transforming the sound from both marimbas during the performance.

Thus, the idea for synchronisation of the all, mentioned above, layers is:

- both percussionists press play on their mobile phones simultaneously (play the same video 3D score), put

- their phones into VR glasses, put them on their heads, and wait for a visual cue
- in the 15th second of the video score, a red blinking square appears in the score (after pressing “play” – there’s 15 seconds to put the VR glasses on head)
 - the red square blinks 9 times (two bars in 4/8 time signature, in 8th = 60 tempo + 1st beat of the “third” bar [9 seconds]; the “third” bar is actually the 1st bar of the piece > letter “A”)
 - 1st percussionist listens to the first bar to feel the tempo and starts conducting the second bar in order to give a sign to a sound engineer to trigger the Ableton Live session (consisting of live-electronics effects as well as a video file) on the 1st beat of the “third” bar of the count-in