

Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project
A way for musicalization of soundscapes

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Abstract

This autoethnographic work unfolds the creative processes and execution of the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project. Rooted in an ambition to investigate the intricate interplay between musicians and audience within a live performance setting, this project harnesses the cityscapes of Porto and Helsinki as wellsprings of creative inspiration, transforming these urban environments into fertile ground for musical expression.

The first chapter is dedicated to academic framing. In the introduction, personal experiences merge with academic investigation, as my background shapes reflective research questions, focusing on sonic identity, soundscape, and artistic creation. The second chapter involves reviewing existing literature, definitions of relevant terms, and explanation of the research methods in detail, uncovering procedures that triggered creative processes. By analysing academic data and exploring concepts such as *deep listening*, *sound walking*, and *acoustic ecology*, the research gains valuable insights and provides a clear direction for the written work. The third chapter unfolds the notion behind the term *musicalization of soundscapes* and delves into the pathway taken from the first ideas until the presentation of the artistic component of the project. Beyond its musical ambitions, the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project seeks to foster awareness of urban soundscapes and the musicalization of the environment. Furthermore, it attempts to mitigate the emotional gap between musicians and their audience, challenging traditional performance paradigms. Using its immersive design and the transformation of the performance space into a live installation, the project establishes a captivating visual and auditory setting, thereby redefining the established boundaries of a musical concert.

The complete scope of this master's degree project includes one concert, performed 15th of May, 2023, and one artistic written component.

Keywords: *Comprovisation, Composition, Deep Listening, Global Musician, Musicalization of Soundscapes, Improvisation, Porto-Helsinki, Sonic Identity, Soundscape, Soundwalk.*

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Muito Obrigado!

Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

“Wherever we are what we listen is mostly noise.
When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. (...)
We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them not as sound effects
but as musical instruments” (Cage, J. CREDO, 1962)

This text delves into the foundational idea behind the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project (PHSPP), a concert created for the conclusion of my master’s degree, presented on the 15th of May 2023. In its broadening concept, this artistic creation has two main focuses: the first being the integration of soundscape elements into musical performances, and the second being the exposition of compositions inspired by processes of listening and interpreting acoustic environments. This assemblage of academic knowledge and practice-based experience will culminate in the introduction of the term *musicalization of soundscapes*, establishing the notion of using soundscapes as a source of artistic content. The term first emerged around January 2021, when I had deep artistic discussions with Ava Grayson, lecturer of the Sound Art & Sonic Arts department of the University of the Arts Helsinki. The concept arose from a discussion about the awareness of the sonic environment within the music composition world, where we tried to find creative approaches for a musical project I was working on at the time, a concept that would become the birth of the “sound promenade projects”. Within the context of the PHSPP, the urban soundscapes of Porto and Helsinki serve as a vibrant representation of daily life, encapsulating cultural and sociological nuances with their elaborate textures of sounds, serving as muses for innovative composition processes. The rhythm of footsteps on cobblestone streets, the melody of car horns harmonizing with birdsong, and the percussive cadence of construction work; all these elements infuse the project with a sense of place and time. By incorporating these cityscape-derived motifs into musical compositions, the project captures the essence of the urban experience and blurs the lines between art and life, inviting the audience to engage with their surroundings in novel and transformative ways.

In terms of symbolic markers of the community's relationship with its environment, the project reimagines the soundscape as a multifaceted representation of daily life. Urban sounds range from the routine hustle and bustle of cosmopolitan activities to the rhythmic

patterns of traffic and the occasional interjection of wildlife. By integrating these sounds, the project aims to show how cultural and social features are embedded within soundscapes.

The Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project embraces the diversity and unpredictability of the urban soundscape, challenging concert formats that often strive for the acoustic purity of the environment. Musicians, audiences, and soundscapes harmonize, creating a rich dialogue of sonic interactions. This deliberate fusion of orchestrated music with and inspired by ambient sounds results in a dynamic, immersive auditory experience.

Personal background

It is relevant to give the reader an accurate description of a personal and professional timeline, to frame my artistic background. Many artistic decisions have been taken because of this heritage of diverse experiences, which have been fruitful and crucial in the building of my artistic identity.

Born and raised in the city of Porto, Portugal, I embarked on a journey of exploration and growth from a young age. My educational background includes a foundation in arts and architecture (2008-2010), which allowed me to cultivate a keen eye for detail and design. In 2010, I made a pivotal decision to pursue a musical career. This decision led me on a path of self-discovery and continuous learning. In 2016, I relocated to Finland, where I embraced various job experiences that enriched my skill set and broadened my horizons.

Since 2018, I have been a student at the Global Music Department, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, where I have not only honed my musical talents but also actively engaged in Helsinki's vibrant music scene. Collaborating with diverse musical groups within the aesthetics of improvisation, circus, folk, classical, and global has expanded my creativity and fostered my ability to work cohesively within a multicultural environment.

My commitment to music education and community outreach is further evidenced by my involvement as a percussion teacher at Orquestra Geração (el Sistema Portugal) from 2014 to 2016, TEMPO Orkesteri (el Sistema Finland) from 2016 to 2019 and as a drum set teacher at the International School of Music, Helsinki (ISM) from 2019 to 2022. I have also been fortunate to co-facilitate workshops/masterclasses of 'creative music making', collaborating with local communities in La Ligua, Petorca, Chile (supported by Greenpeace Chile) and Brazil, as integrated parts of my Global Music degree studies. These experiences have allowed me to share my passion for music and nurture the talents of aspiring musicians.

Currently, I consider myself a percussionist, improviser, and global musician continually refining my skills in performance, composition, and production. As a performer, my main instruments are multi-percussion set-up, vibraphone, and hand/frame drums. Lately, I have been developing my relationship with electro-acoustic prepared instruments and exploring the use of my voice as a new tool for expressing my sonic identity.

Research Questions

The Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project addresses the following research questions:

- **What are the implications of using guided listening methods for triggering inspiration in music composition processes?**
- **What does the notion of *musicalization of soundscapes* mean, and how can it be applied to the creative processes used in this project?**

These questions address the conceptual foundation of my research by looking at the efficacy of guided listening processes to trigger inspiration. Exploring the effectiveness of *sound walk* (Schafer, 1977) and *deep listening* (Oliveros, 2005) techniques, one can investigate how these methods enhance creative processes for composers and musicians. Furthermore, by proposing the term *musicalization of soundscapes* I investigate the necessity of defining this term for the purpose of academic clarity and communication.

Literature review

The following sources provide insights into the concepts, techniques, and methodologies employed in the notion of *musicalization of soundscapes* and the creative processes of the project.

"Comprovisation": The Various Facets of Composed Improvisation within Interactive Performance Systems" (Dudas, 2010) displays the intricate interplay between composition and improvisation, unveiling the diverse dimensions of interactive performances. In this article, Dudas sheds light on the innovative approaches to blending structured composition with spontaneous improvisational elements. I have drawn inspiration

from these processes to create compositions that explore diversity in interpretation and methodology. For these processes to be effective, I have used, among others, the references from **“The Field of Musical Improvisation: A Comprehensive Study”** (Cobussen, 2017), a research project that provides a comprehensive overview of music improvisation by studying various improvisational techniques and practices. Cobussen’s work offers valuable insights into the methodologies employed by musicians when engaging with soundscapes as source material.

The foundation of the concept for artistic creation is based on processes of *deep listening* of the urban *soundscapes* of Porto and Helsinki, and the relation between music and audience. **“Deep Listening: A Holistic Approach to Sonic Perception”** (Oliveros, 2005) introduces the concept of *deep listening*, emphasizing an immersive and meditative approach to sound. This holistic perspective is instrumental in understanding how artists engage with natural sounds on a profound level, leading to their integration into musical compositions. Regarding the analysis of the relation between sound and people, **“Soundscape Studies and Sonic Environments”** (Schafer, 1977) foundational work on **“The Soundscape”** introduces the concept of acoustic ecology, exploring the relationship between humans and their sonic environment. Understanding the dynamics of soundscapes in their natural state provides a basis for their transformation into musical forms.

In **“Rewilding Music: Improvisation, wilderness, and the global musician”** Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis (2016) writes that “The Global Musician” presents a paradigm shift in music education. Rather than focusing on memorizing diverse musical forms, the program emphasizes equipping musicians with adaptable skills and cultural awareness. The development of a ‘global musicianship’ is intrinsically connected with the development of a strong musical identity, as discussed in **“Forming a Sonic Identity through the Integration of Transculturality and Technology”** (Thomson and Lähdeoja, 2019, p. 33). “The concept of a musical identity is increasingly formed by drawing on a diverse range of influences and experiences, both locally and globally.” (Thomson and Lähdeoja, 2019, p. 35). The notion of musical identity in contemporary contexts is evolving, shaped by a myriad of influences and experiences from various corners of the world. Thomson and Lähdeoja emphasize this phenomenon, highlighting that musical identities are no longer confined to singular cultural or geographical boundaries. Instead, individuals and communities are crafting their musical identities by embracing an array of global and local influences.

Chapter II: Research Methods and Keywords

Research Methods

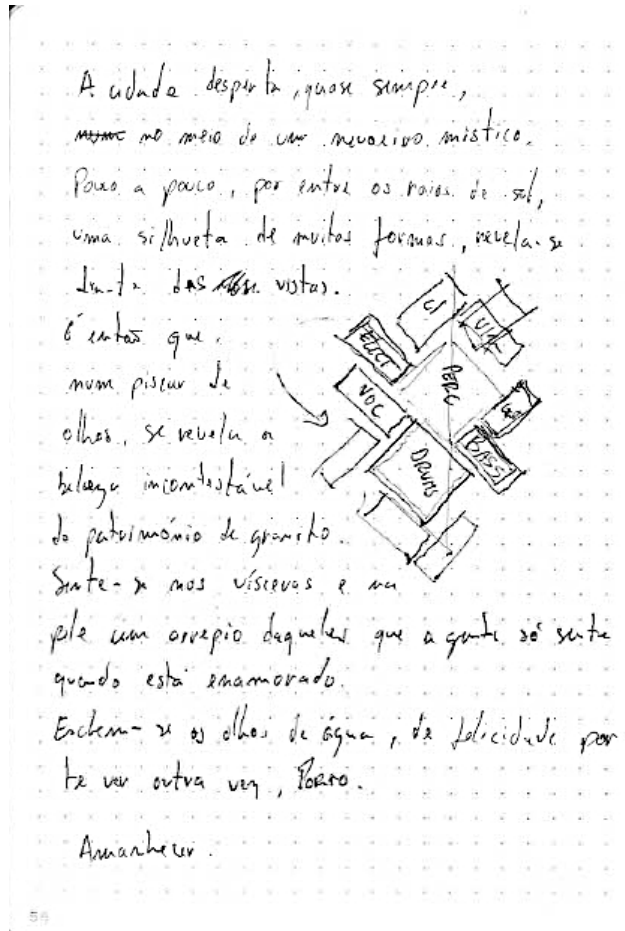


Figure 1. Extract from personal handwritten journal (2023), combining writing and drawing as a thinking process.

This section describes the methods taken to better place this artistic project within a theoretical framework.

This work is introduced as “(...) exposition of practice as research” (Borgdorff and Schwab, 2014) and is presented as an autoethnography (Ellis et al, 2011). Borgdorff and Schwab discuss the term *exposition* as such: “With the notion of ‘exposition’, we wish to suggest an operator between art and writing. Although ‘exposition’ seems to comply with traditional metaphors of vision and illumination, it should not be taken to suggest the external exposure of practice to the light of rationality; rather, it is meant as the re-doubling of practice to artistically move from artistic ideas to epistemic claims.” (“The Exposition of

Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia”, 2014, p. 16).

Autoethnography is the main writing method used when later discussing creative composition processes, preparation and rehearsals, and concert descriptions. Ellis et al describe autoethnography as “(...) an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis et al., 2011). They further recognise that “autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist.” (Ellis et al., p. 2). This methodological approach fits the aesthetic of the artistic content, creating a solid academic base for the exploration of the full scope of happenings during the conception of the project.

To bring the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project to life, I have organised the framework in four different stages. These four different parts are sectioned chronologically, however, they intersect with each other constantly along the process. Revisiting recordings during the rehearsals period or reflecting on scholarly content to support the compositional process are examples of the intersectionality of research methods.



Figure 2. Work timeline

As described in *Figure 2*, the first period was spent collecting and analysing recordings of soundscapes from Porto and Helsinki. For this process, I have used a *zoomH5* portable recorder and a handwritten journal to describe possible visual interactions relevant to the artistic process. This process happened in very different timeframes. As an example, the analysed sounds from Helsinki were captured back in the winter of 2020/2021, by the time I was preparing for the ‘Helsinki Sound Promenade Project’, the first concretization of a similar artistic concept.

The second period was spent ‘musicalizing’ the ideas collected. This process happened during the time I spent having my exchange/field trip in Natal, Brazil. This presented an exceptional challenge considering I was being exposed to an immense quantity of new soundscapes, whilst trying to delve into soundscapes of diverse places across the world. It is fair to say that, at the end of the process, this re-location ended up having a big influence on the composition of the new repertoire. Furthermore, it became the catalyser to build a solid foundation for the term *musicalization of soundscapes*, exporting the idea to the imaginary world of interpretation of soundscapes as an individual inspiration process.

The third period happened in two parts. The first was an intensive residency in Kallio-Kunikala (Kunkkula)¹, where a group of ten musicians, rehearsed, practised, developed, and

¹ Kallio-Kunikala, known as ‘Kunkkula’ among the Sibelius Academy’s community, is a unit of the University of the Arts Helsinki, located in Järvenpää. A compound of buildings dating to the 1920’s, repurposed as living facilities, conference rooms, recording studios and practice rooms, available for students, researchers and artists connected with the University of the Arts Helsinki.

discussed approaches to the repertoire. During this period, we recorded full sessions of the practices and used the content for further development of the project. The second part happened in the studios of Sibelius Academy. At this moment we were able to explore the compositions in their full completion, having finalized the electronically manipulated soundscape tracks. The concert happened on the 15th of May 2023.

The fourth and final stage of this process is the completion of this written work, reflecting on all the content collected, the performances, and the academic literature to support the research.

Artistic Research

“What is it? Why do it?”. This contemplation led me to believe that it is crucial, both for the theoretical context and for the reader's comprehension, to articulate the significance of conducting artistic research. Trying not to fall into the trap of oversimplification, artistic research combines the interpellation of two aspects: **“artistic process** (acts inside the practice) + **arguing for a point of view** (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work)” (Hannula et al., 2014, p. 29). Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén (2014) have put together a table that synthesises the balance between artistic practices and written content. In *Figure 3* they unpack important synthesized actions within the creation of the artistic content and the written practices:

Table 2.1. Basic Formula of Artistic Research

Artistic Process: Acts Inside the Practice	Arguing for a Point of View (Context, Tradition, and Their Interpretation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committed with an eye on the conditions of the practice ▪ Documenting the acts ▪ Moving between insider and outsider positions ▪ Preparing works of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social and theoretical imagination ▪ Hermeneutics ▪ Conceptual, linguistic and argumentative innovations ▪ Verbalization

Figure 3. Basic Formula of Artistic Research (Hannula et al, 2014, p.29)

This reference represents an accurate description of the development of the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project, in both practical and theoretical terms.

Ethical considerations

This artistic research and written work were conducted in accordance with “The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland”, and the “Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2023”. The work follows the “basic principles of research integrity”, such as “reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability”, complying with the description of “good research practices” (TENK, 2023). Within the “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity”, were considered the contexts of “Research Environment”, “Mentoring”, “Research Procedures”, “Data Practices and Management”, “Collaborative Working”, and “Publication”. The collaborators of this project agreed to participate freely in the project and gave their consent to be named and credited for all their artistic contributions. Signed consent forms were provided for each collaborator, which have been archived. The consent form that was provided can be found in the appendix of this work.

Keywords

The following list discusses the most relevant terms and notions used throughout this written work.

Global musician

As written in the description on its website, “The Global Music Department embraces pluralistic, fluid approaches to sound, music, culture and identity”, and it proposes “... pathways for students from diverse musical and cultural backgrounds to develop creative, flexible, musical, pedagogical and research skills, intertwined with an in-depth understanding and hands-on experience of working in intercultural and transcultural environments.” The term *Global musician* has been discussed by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis (2016), who writes “Rather than striving to produce a walking lexicon of the world’s various musics, the Global Music programme aims to equip musicians with the skills and attitudes to respond meaningfully in any given context.” (Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, p.19). Laonikos further refers to the work of Peter Renshaw (as cited in Thomson, 2014, p.27 and Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, 2016 p.19) who has put together a list of competencies that can be recognised as valuable in the development of a Global Musicianship. “These competencies

are broken down into **values** (e.g. “honesty; compassion; integrity”); **interpersonal skills** (e.g. “empathy; trust; openness; [...] confidence to share one’s vulnerability”); **communication skills** (e.g. “framing appropriate questions; active listening [...]; being open and non-judgemental”); **personal skills** (e.g. “time-management; reliability; [...] managing stress”), as well as **performance** and **creative skills** (e.g. “technical skills on instrument or voice; musical versatility and flexible approaches to performance; [...] quality of listening” and sensitivity to sound; [...] fluency in improvisation; [...] understanding different approaches to arts practice)” (Renshaw 2010, pp.66–71, as cited in Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, p.20 and Thomson, 2014, p.27). As of today, I have experienced the effectiveness of the application of these values in the context of the professional music world. I also acknowledge that the department is accomplishing something valuable, by creating space for individual creativity and artistic growth, crucial for the realization of this artistic project.

Sonic identity

The Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project reflects my diverse background and is a strong representation of “who” I am as a performer and composer, and it has become the platform for the development of my musical identity. As stated by Thomson and Lähdeoja (2019) “The concept (...) is increasingly formed by drawing on a diverse range of influences and experiences, both locally and globally.” (Thomson and Lähdeoja, 2019, p. 35). “Inherent within these processes is the knowledge that a musical identity is not static but is constantly evolving by nature.” (Thomson and Lähdeoja, 2019, p. 35). Furthermore, “individual sonic identity is embedded into larger frameworks of cultural identity and involves genre-specific value systems. The amount of space inherently available for individual expression varies across musical genres, traditions, cultures and musical approaches.” (Thomson and Lähdeoja, 2019, p. 35)

Soundscape

Soundscapes are a source of inspiration due to their unpredictability and constant presence. All sounds around us can become ‘music’ when interpreted as such. As stated by Schafer (1994), the soundscape is “The sonic environment. Technically, any portion of the sonic environment is regarded as a field for study. The term may refer to actual

environments, or to abstract constructions such as musical compositions and tape montages, particularly when considered as an environment.” (Schafer, 1994, p. 287-278). “While innovative in the 1970s when Schafer first started using the word soundscape, it has since entered standard English dictionaries (e.g., Oxford Music Dictionary or Dictionary.com).” (Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, p. 23)

Acoustic Ecology

As described by Schafer (1994), “Ecology is the study of the relationship between living organisms and their environment. Acoustic ecology is thus the study of the effects of the acoustic environment or SOUNDSCAPE on the physical responses or behavioural characteristics of creatures living within it. Its particular aim is to draw attention to imbalances which may have unhealthy or inimical effects.” (Schafer, 1994, p. 284). This ethos becomes crucial in the Sound Promenade Projects, as the audience is invited to be present and move freely in the space as if they were experiencing a *promenade* in an urban environment. The concert feeds from the synergy created between the relation of music/audience/soundscape. Acoustic ecology “(...) can only be accomplished by considering on location the effects of the acoustic environment on the creatures living in it” (Schafer, 1994, p. 218)

Soundwalk

“Soundwalk is a term originating with Schafer and the World Soundscape Project, which refers to walking with a focus on listening to sounds and one’s relationship to the environment through sound.” (Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, p. 24). “Hildegard Westerkamp, associated with the World Soundscape Project, explains that a “sound walk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are” (Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis, p. 24). In the concert, the concepts of walking and listening simultaneously are explored in two different ways – the physical and the temporal. As described before, the audience is invited to walk during the performance, giving the listeners the possibility of exploring the sound and the space from different perspectives. This action represents the physical approach to the act of walking. The temporal approach reaches the sensorial perception of time, offering everyone the possibility of immersing themselves in the performance. This exploration of sound as a guideline is extensively discussed by Schafer (1994), who explains that “The soundwalk is an exploration

of the soundscape of a given area using a score as a guide. The score consists of a map, drawing the listener's attention to unusual sounds and ambiances to be heard along the way. A sound walk might also contain ear training exercises.” (Schafer, 1994, p. 226)

Deep listening

“Deep Listening is a practice that is intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible.” (Oliveros, 2005, p. 14). This practice relates to the beginnings of the creative processes of the Sound Promenade Project. In Oliveros’s exercises, I found effective methods to listen profoundly to the sonic environment, being able to expand my listening capacities to decode and analyse formally its characteristics.

Chapter III: Sound Promenade Project

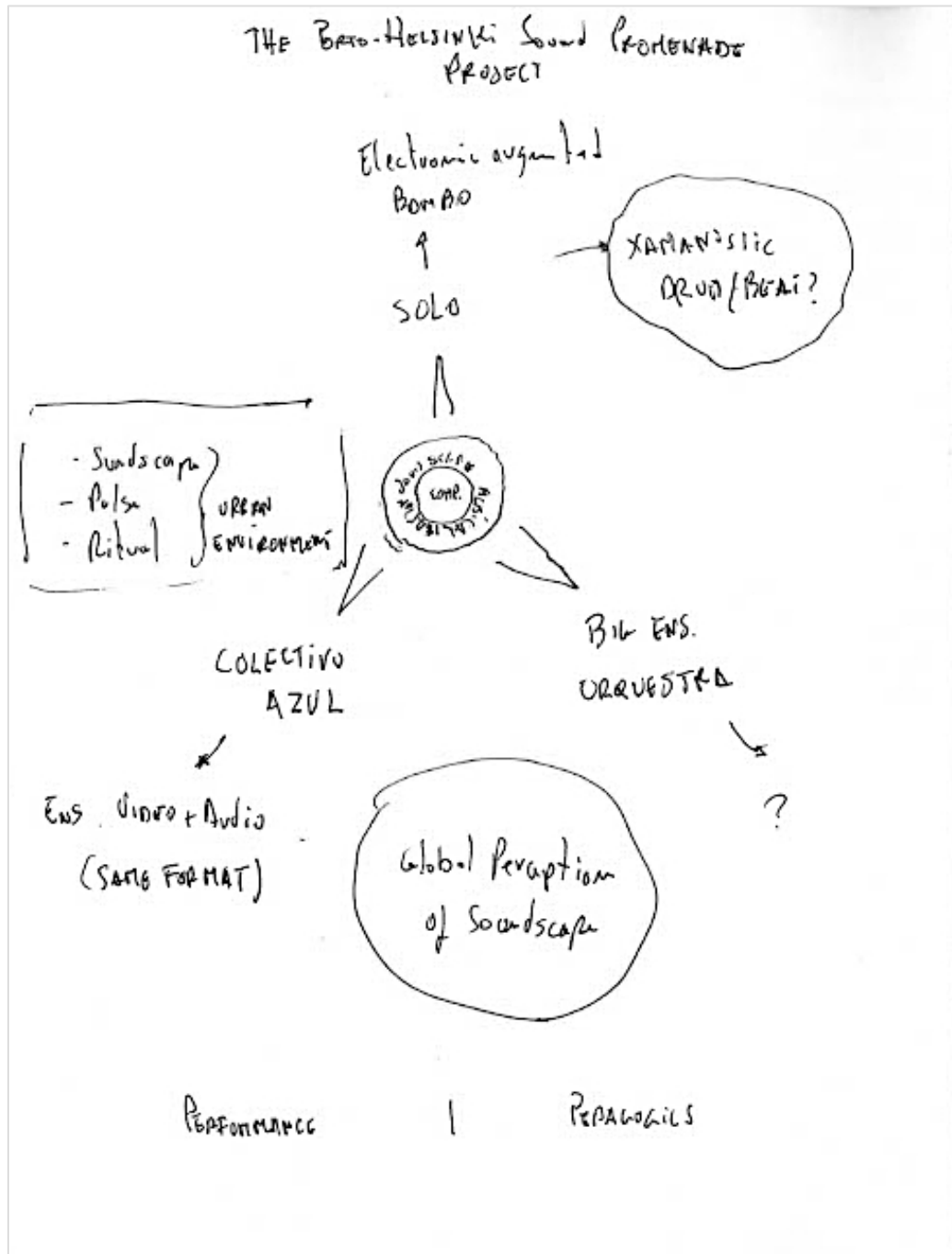


Figure 4. Sketch diagram of the 'big' vision of the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project (2021), describing the division in three performance parts: Solo, Small Ensemble (described as Colectivo Azul) and Big Ensemble (described as Big Ens. Orquestra).

The concept of the *Sound Promenade Project* was primarily idealised over the idea of exploring sounds as part of a musical performance in continuous motion. The title encompasses three structural ideas rooted in different inspirations. The word **Sound** refers to the main artistic object, becoming the focal content for performers and audience. The word

Promenade was inspired by Modest Mussorgsky's (1839-1881) composition *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874). As a percussionist, I have played numerous orchestral pieces, among them Maurice Ravel's (1875-1937) arrangement of Mussorgsky's masterpiece. In its composition, the composer presents an occurring motif, repeating it in between each movement (picture), and calls it *Promenade*, the French word for promenade, stroll or walk. I remember at the time, circa 2008, being fascinated with the idea of a musical composition, in a Western classical orchestra environment, that could bring such a clear visual image of an actual 'walk' through a gallery of paintings. Playing and listening to the composition felt as if I was walking between rooms after contemplating every picture very carefully. By transporting this holistic idea of having a *promenade* into an urban space, I found a cohesive balance between processes of 'sound walking' and 'deep listening', which later became focal points in the research. The word **Project** reflects the collaborative process involved in the creation, development, and execution of the concert. A definition for a structured procedure involving a collective of musicians and technicians within a specific timeframe.

When considering the concept of listening to a concert in a traditional context, it's common that the audience focuses on the composition and on the execution itself, often in spaces created to most benefit the acoustic qualities of instruments and/or voices, frequently absorbing or annulling the noise produced by the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, soundscapes are not just a representation of noise. They are a live demonstration of people's everyday experiences who co-habit the space itself. Quoting from my bachelor project work, "Urban sounds like the cosmopolitan daily activities, the traffic, the industries, the constructions and demolitions, the dynamics between rush hours and less busy moments in a specific place and the occasional wildlife, become symbols of cultural and sociological aspects, and these sounds can provide information on how the community relates with the environment and with itself. In my vision of this project, one would explore the acousmatic environment, taking advantage of its variety and its unpredictability, unpacking an infinite box of possible dialogues that enrich the performance itself." (Lopes, J. 2021).

Musicalization of Soundscapes

Musicalization of soundscapes is a term I apply to describe a **creative process for music making, employing the use of soundscapes as a source of artistic inspiration**. This notion aims to widen perspectives for **artistic processes** and **freedom of musical expression**, empowering artists to connect with their imagination and find their uniqueness. It

is also a call for a deep dive into the spectrum of **mindful listening**, to reflect on **heritage** and **cultural signals**, emerging from subtle nuances present in everyday urban sounds; an opportunity to identify sonic diversity and its interaction with the environment. The result of a process of *musicalization of soundscapes* is not tied to any specific sound aesthetics, in fact, it embraces diversity and acknowledgement of **cultural heritages**. These processes allow for an **interdisciplinary approach** to the interpretation of soundscapes, expanding the exploration of sound at a **multi-sensory** level.

When considering using the process of *musicalization of soundscapes* in composition material, from the perspective of the instrumentalist, I identify three categories for *musicalizing* sonic content: **Reproduction**, **Transcription** and **Aural interpretation**.

Reproduction: Using recorded soundscapes introduced as sonic content that are integrated into the composition. By using speakers, soundscapes can be transformed, distorted, or layered, creating a unique auditory experience for listeners. This process allows for creative exploration, enhancing the richness and depth of soundscapes.

Transcription: Using imitation processes with one own's instrument. Listening to soundscapes, interpreting the sound's dynamics and timbre qualities, and replicating the qualities of the sounds with an acoustic/electronic instrument, voice, or body.

Aural interpretation: Self-interpretation of soundscapes. This exercise converges listening and interpretation processes with freedom of expression. When improvising, the performer connects with their imagination, drawing from their cultural background. They play what they find meaningful, embracing their unique perspective.

To interpret the term and practice the *musicalization of soundscapes*, the musician is constantly exposed to all three processes above. However, it is within the realm of aural interpretation that new creations find room to evolve into distinct expressions, allowing artists to translate diverse sounds into their own expressive musical language. This fresh musical content holds the potential to serve as original compositional material, providing instrumentalists with the opportunity to unfold their creative expressions.

Porto-Helsinki

The two cities presented in the title of the artistic project are representative of geographical places I acknowledge as 'home' and main sources of historical, social, and sonic memories. The first project called the *Helsinki Sound Promenade Project*, created as the final work for my global music bachelor degree studies had the concept of creating a path

through the city of Helsinki, and by walking through it, the musicians and the audience were invited to interpret the soundscapes as part of the compositional material. Fast forwarding to the project described in this written work, I have decided to add the sounds and imagery of *Porto*, creating a relation with the memories of both places and my own sound heritage, resulting in the main inspiration for the artistic concept.

Artistic Creation

The creative process started during my bachelor studies. The project Helsinki Sound Promenade, created for the conclusion of the degree, became the fertile ground that forested numerous thoughts of interpreting the environment around, which became an infinite source of inspiration for musical content. From the beginning, the idea was to keep the same structure and framework of improvisation for creating artistic material, but this time diversify the size of the ensembles. I concluded I would like to work with solos/duos, the band (up to five people) and a larger ensemble. The idea developed into creating three different approaches to musical practices, using different techniques of music making such as improvisation, real-time composition, comprovisation, and composed material.

The result was a concert divided into three different parts, each of them representative of different approaches. To bring this project to life, amongst the most important aspects throughout the process were the discussions I had with musicians and artists I respect. Having conversations about the concept with people whose artistic vision I trust, gave me the clearance I needed and opened many paths for creativity and execution. Through this sharing process, I found the right people for the right tasks and gathered a group of humans I consider artists above all. Each person of this ensemble has a very special set of skills; characteristics I wish to be able to enhance through my compositions and artistic direction.

Composition

As a percussionist trained in a traditional Western classical environment, I have been playing composed music for most of my career and the focus on the virtuosity of the practice of the instrument has been constant during my academic path. Coming to the global music department challenged me to search for, within my skills, the ability to create my own music and perform it as a valid piece of art. Although I acknowledge the immense value of this versatility, it was a challenge to create content that would be both interesting as music and

have compositional qualities that match my concert's expectations. Within my most conservative thoughts, being a composer is a career on its own, with a specific path that gives one tools to create, orchestrate, and practice the repertoire and, in a way, I felt quite insecure about being able to create good and enough content for this presentation. It was through my real-world experiences that I found a balance between creating content and practising it in an organized manner.

Acknowledging my position as a composer helped me understand how much and what kind of support I would need to make music that matched my views and expectations. Like a band needs different people/instruments to make the music happen, the music-making process can be done by a team. With this in mind, I gathered a team including Joni Vierre and Nicolás Castañeda, and together we found a balance that defined which tasks each of us took care of in this process. I have also realised that I should be playing some music composed by other people, which is the case of *Montanha de Pedra*, composed by Kata Vuoristo. My role in this process came to be a composer and music director of most of the songs, some with more intervention from others, some less, where dialogue was always the main vehicle to create music that would make us proud and showcase an immense variety of skills.

Multi-creation process

The term multi-creation (Castrillón, 2021) is a compositional process that encompasses a dynamic fusion of methods, embracing traditional **composition** techniques, **improvisation**, and the blend of both, known as **comprovisation**.

The compositional underpinning of this project is framed in a theoretical exploration of **improvisation** within the context of urban soundscapes, as well as the personalized interpretation of physical landscapes. As described by Cobussen, “(...) improvisation in music should not be restricted to so-called improvised music; all music making, including composing and arranging, contains stages in its production process which could be called – or be interpreted as – improvisatory.” (Cobussen, 2017, p. 42), The performance is structured into three distinct segments: The initial section showcases compositions influenced by specific locations within two different spaces. These songs explore traditional methods of composition, structured and presented in a conventional Western-European classic form of melody and harmony. The second segment serves as an improvisational laboratory where musicians and audience engage with pre-recorded compositions derived from urban soundscapes, immersing themselves in the details of these auditory environments and

fostering a dynamic dialogue. The final segment presents a compilation of pieces that reflect the culmination of this research, and the application of methods of *musicalization of soundscapes*. This section focuses on methods of **comprovisation** (Dudas, 2010, p. 30). As Dudas points out in his “Comprovisation”: The Various Facets of Composed Improvisation within Interactive Performance Systems”, “one of the two basic species of composition improvisation relations” is “improvising with tools in order to create pre-compositional material” (Dudas, 2010, p. 30).

Planification, Preparation & Creative Process

In 2021, the ‘The Helsinki Sound Promenade Project’ (THSPP) was brought to life. I described the project as: “The Helsinki Sound Promenade is an artistic research project that intends to analyse and explore the relation between the soundscape, the musicians, and the audience in a live performance setting. The live installation performed by *Colectivo AZUL*² uses the urban environment of Helsinki as inspiration and a stage for a happening where the audience is invited to walk and listen to the soundscape and musical interventions during the path. Musicians and audience are exposed to pre-recorded sound and landscape of the city, interpreting its sonic complexity, and exploring the dialogue between the three parties.” The concert was presented as a projected ‘sound walk’, collected as a *POV shot* (shot as if through the eyes of the character), accompanied by the soundscapes of Helsinki, compositions, and improvised musical moments. An immersive experience that became the seed for further development of artistic creations and a source of theoretical framework to support future research.

In a later analysis of the THSPP, it became clear that the project was representative of **one** approach for processes of *musicalization of soundscapes*. The term had already been discussed by that time, as part of the written work to support the performance. With the focus on the soundscapes, THSPP was an example of **reproduction** of the sonic material, presented as recorded, avoiding being subject to manipulation or transformation, except for balancing and mixing to better support the performance’s sound quality.

² *Colectivo AZUL* – Multicultural music collective, created in 2021, produced and organized by me. A diverse group of musicians working in different setups, interpreting, and performing my compositions or music created by others.

Expansion & Retraction

The THSPP experience triggered the necessity of searching for new approaches to the *musicalization of soundscapes*. It also revealed opportunities for exploring different sizes of musical ensembles and diversifying the approach and treatment of the broadcasted soundscapes. From this process, three different possibilities arose: **solo**, **small ensemble**, and **big ensemble**. Establishing three different sizes of groups was crucial for defining the performance's shape, clarifying the compositional material, and initiating contact with the musicians that would be part of this musical journey. The ideas developed and the solo concept became an improvisation dialogue between two or three elements of the ensemble. At the time of the concretization of the concert, *Colectivo AZUL* performed as a duo, trio, quintet (three different formations), and dectet.

Furthermore, on a micro-scale, a composition/arrangement of a musical piece can benefit from the introduction of a diversity of elements. By expanding or retracting components (for example: timbre, dynamics, number of instruments or density), the composer introduces the perception of **movement**, not as physical, but as a sensory faculty. On a macro scale, that motion or movement perception can also be approached, and in this case, it was introduced by the decision to perform with a variety of different sizes of ensembles, carefully positioned in the timeframe of the sixty-minute concert, giving the audience a possibility of *moving* between the micro and the macro, the short and the long, the dense and the thin, the individual and the group, etcetera.

Space & Movement

“How many images do I need to listen to sounds?”

This question arose during the compositional process, resulting in a development introduced in the PHSPP³: annulling the visual content and giving full focus to the music. This decision became imperative in the planning of the space as well as the overall vision of the performance. As presented before in this written work (pages 20-21), the title includes the word *Promenade*, suggesting different interpretations of motion. It has been also discussed

³ PHSPP: abbreviation for Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project.

the quality of movement as a sensory faculty, through compositional technics. There are two other ways in which this project approaches movement. Both are physical, one is visible, and the other is audible. The visible motion is the one of the people, the audience attending the performance. For this action to succeed, one task was given to the public: *“During the performance, the audience is invited to walk around the space, without limitations. One should, at least, change places once during the concert.”* The audible motion comes in the form of sound and specialization of the sound system (PA) assigned to the soundscape amplification. A quadriphonic system (a four-speaker structure) was used, with one speaker in each corner of the room. In addition, the sound emanating from the speakers was manipulated live, creating an active motion of noise and soundscapes.

As mentioned earlier, I was an architecture student before pursuing professional music studies. Being influenced by this path and embracing its contribution to my artistic vision, I have recreated and redesigned the stage into a live sound installation, exploring the space in innovative ways. This process brought challenges and limitations that were overcome with good communication between the technical team, the production team, and me. As a result, we were able to build a PA system holding thirty-one (31) channels on the ground, which were allocated to the band’s instruments and voices, as well as a custom-built stage accommodating twelve (12) 1-meter X 2-meter -raisers.

The final solution that was used as a template for the performance:

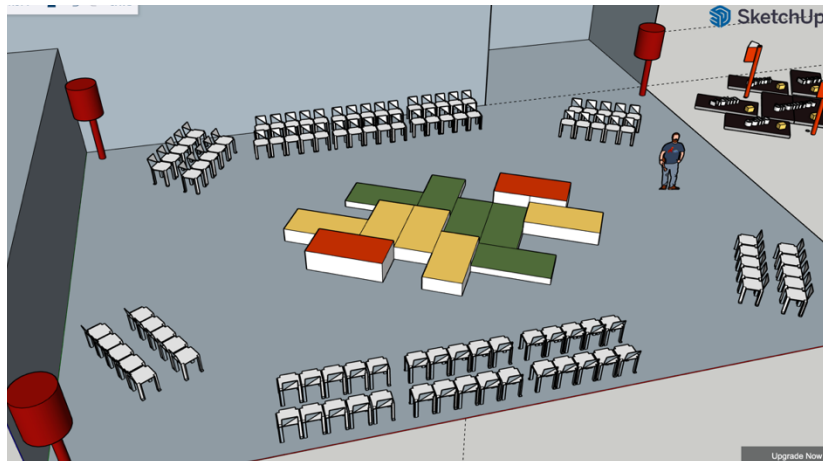


Figure 9. 3D model (2023). Final position of the stage platforms. Indication of the different heights of the platforms in Black Box (Musiikkitalo)

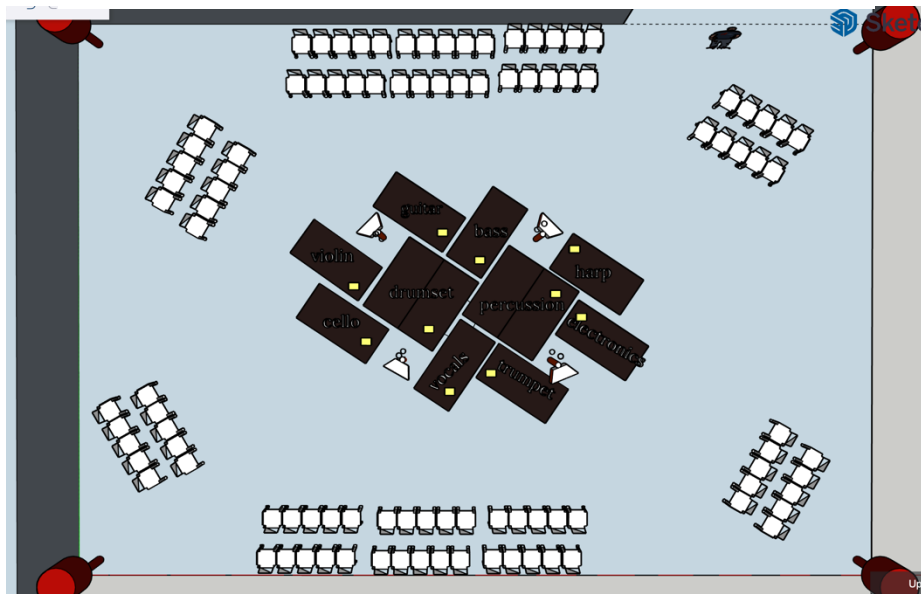


Figure 10. 3D model (2023). Final blueprint of the stage map, PA, and audience.

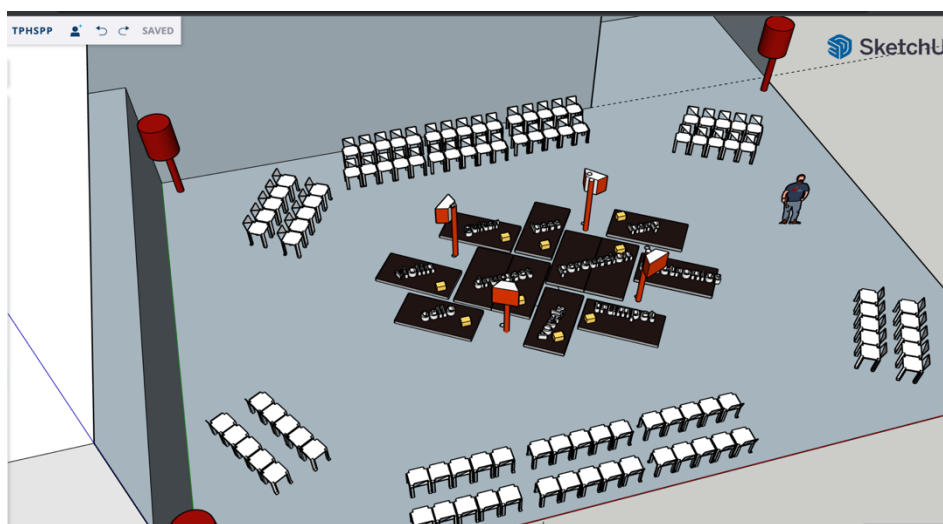


Figure 11. 3D model (2023). Final blueprint of the stage map, PA, and audience. (Perspective)

Performance

The concert took place on the 15th of May 2023, in the Black Box, Helsinki Music Centre (Musiikkitalo).

Clectivo AZUL: the ensemble of artists for the performance:

- **João Luís** (Portugal), percussion, composition, artistic direction,
- **A-P Rissanen** (Finland), drum set
- **Ami Kajan** (Finland), electric bass
- **Carolina Stenbäck** (Finland), cello
- **Grácio Zaqueu** (Brazil), trumpet
- **Joni Vierre** (Finland) electric guitar, arrangements
- **Kata Vuoristo** (Finland) vocals, violin, asalto, composition
- **Nancy Tahlfeldt** (Finland) live electronics
- **Nicolás Castañeda** (Colombia) harpa llanera, arrangements
- **Noah Eamon** (The Netherlands) violin.

Tech team & Production:

- Iiro Sivula, Niko Laassonen, Jukka Kolimaa
- Anna Huuskonen, Minttu Hellsten



Figure 12. Concert Poster. Copyright João Luís, Photo: Manuela Santos, Brazil 2023

Set List

Helsinki. Composition: João Luís. Voice, percussion, drum set, electric bass, guitar.

Montanha de Pedra. Composition: Kata Vuoristo, Lyrics: João Luís. Voice, percussion, drum set, electric bass, guitar.

Impro. Composition: João Luís. Soundscapes: Nancy Tahlfeldt. Improvisation: Vibraphone, electroacoustic bass drum, guitar, harpa llanera, live electronics.

LaMer(e). Composition: João Luís, Arrangements: João Luís, Joni Vierre, Nicolás Castañeda. Voice, percussion, drum set, electric bass, guitar, live electronics, trumpet, harpa llanera, violin, cello.

Um teminha. Composition: João Luís. Voice, percussion, drum set, electric bass, guitar, live electronics, trumpet, harpa llanera, violin, cello.

Canção das novidades. Composition: João Luís, Arrangements: Kata Vuoristo & João Luís. Vibrafone, 2 violins, cello, harpa llanera.

Natal groove. Composition: João Luís, Arrangements: Joni Vierre, Nicolás Castañeda. Percussion, trumpet, drum set, electric bass, guitar.

Breathe in, breathe out. Composition: João Luís. Voice, percussion, drum set, electric bass, guitar, live electronics, trumpet, harpa llanera, violin, cello.

Because of the diverse nature of the repertoire, different materials needed a specific approach. This connects with the concept of **multi-creation** (Castrillón, 2023) processes, outlined earlier on pages 22 and 23.

The first two songs, **Helsinki** and *Montanha de Pedra*, were composed as a standard, meaning that the band of five elements interpreted the pieces from a lead sheet, based on a formal structure with written melody and chords. These two songs benefited from processes of *musicalization of soundscapes* in the realm of the **aural interpretation** (page 20) of sound and landscapes, using a multi-disciplinary approach; Helsinki was inspired by an imaginary melody and Montanha de Pedra was born as a poem.

The second part of the concert, described above as Impro, was sectioned into three parts: Melodies, Textures and Rhythm were played on a “free interpretation-based” composition. The soundscape played live, outlined earlier as a **reproduction** method (page 20), acted as a guideline for a piece of 15 minutes, where three different approaches are to be considered. Two duos and one solo were played, completely improvised, with no defined roles when considering positions of leadership.

The following compositions in the concert are the result of aural interpretation. The piece *La Mer(e)* was originally composed for a small ensemble and was now arranged for an ensemble of ten musicians. In this piece I take the role of conducting the overall feeling, sharing that responsibility with occasional playing. I take the responsibility of defining the tempos and dynamics as well as maintaining the energy and flow of the composition through time. *Um Teminha* became the only piece of this set that had some level of the pedagogical environment during the working process and as **comprovisation** (Dudas 2010). This piece is

the result of a mix of two compositional techniques: real-time composition and true composing. This material was brought to the ensemble as a suggestion of notes to be played as an accompaniment to a melody played by the vibraphone. The timing, the dynamics, and the frequency of the notes were explored in a pedagogical setting, where the musicians of the ensemble were able to discover and define by themselves what material to play. This session was run by myself where I brought a step-by-step set of exercises that enabled the musicians to gradually develop tools to interpret the composition and perform it with character and courage. *Canção das Novidades* is an arrangement of a melody to be played directly from the score. **Natal groove**, like the first two pieces of the concert, was brought to an ensemble of five musicians, as a lead sheet, interpreted and played as such, incorporating solos of trumpet and guitar. **Breath in, Breath Out** is a composition that is a mix of standard and written motives for brass, strings, and voice. Mostly conducted by me, this piece is a place where the collective frees itself and manages its own vibe.

Conclusions

Reflections

When faced with the challenge of developing new compositions, I found the need to explore sources of inspiration to start creating new music. I have always felt strongly connected with the physical space around me and how much it affects my perception of the environment. Supported by a path as a former architecture student (back in 2008), I have become quite critical and an active observer of the human-built environment, finding reasonable theoretical explanations for human behaviour and perception of space. It became fascinating to observe how people inhabit the spaces, interpreting the physical environment, and challenging possible ideas the architect might have tried to solve. I find this same relationship between creator and user in music as well, in that the dynamics between composer and listener face similar interaction. The art of the composer is constantly challenged by the audience, who interprets the sounds based on factors such as cultural, social, and historical, among others.

It was in the analysis of this perception of the listener I found fertile ground for creative and fresh ideas. With the research question ‘What are the implications of using guided listening methods for triggering inspiration in music composition processes?’, I investigated the efficacy of guided listening processes to trigger inspiration, exploring the effectiveness of *sound walk* (Schafer, 1977) and *deep listening* (Oliveros, 2005) techniques. Identifying the steps or conditions that optimize the value of such processes could provide practical insights for artists and educators. This question allowed for a deep exploration of methodologies, potentially leading to the development of guidelines or best practices for incorporating guided listening processes into the creative workflow.

Exploring the conceptual foundations and creative approach that underpin the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project's philosophical vision, brought the necessity to support the thinking processes with scholarly points of view. With the second research question ‘What does the notion of *musicalization of soundscapes* mean, and how can it be applied to the creative processes used in this project?’ I investigated the necessity of defining this term for the purpose of academic clarity and communication. To achieve my expectations, I explored existing literature, artistic practices, and interdisciplinary contexts to establish the term's relevance. By addressing the previous questions, I expect this research can contribute

to offering practical guidance for artists and scholars interested in exploring the creative possibilities within the intersection of sound and music.

Reflecting on the journey of creating this artistic project, I am profoundly aware and grateful for the privilege to walk this path of developing my musical and artistic identity. What started as a compositional journey, ended up being a deep dive into the academic world and the philosophical thinking behind a “simple idea” for a concert. During this process, I revisited my background, not just as a musician, but also as a human, investigating deeply my social and cultural roots, as well as the diverse academic institutions I have been through. By questioning and understanding (a bit better) my position in this world I call ‘music’, the unfolding of this artistic research happened very naturally. The path has been influenced by teachers and scholars who were determinant in the orientation of the navigation of the academic environment. With proper guidance and curiosity, I found descriptions and answers to terms that have been mere practical forms of expression within my performative world as a percussionist, and this academic support added a solid foundation to my artistic expectations and views. Within these processes, I uncovered credible justification to implement the concept of *musicalization of soundscapes*, a subject I aim to continue developing from political and ecological perspectives, possibly at a doctoral artistic research level.

The public presentation of the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project is the reflection of this whole process, unfolding a practical example of the description of artistic research (Page 15). From the point of describing processes of *musicalization of soundscapes* (Pages 21- 22) to the description of creative methods to achieve the practical result, this written work will prevail as a depository of experiences and thinking processes that contributed to a deep understanding of my artistic capacities and ambitions.

Contemplating the challenges emerging during creative work, I can argue that time is always an issue impossible to control. Certainly, the project would have benefited from a longer and deeper development in aspects such as the co-creative processes of composition. This is an important factor to reflect on the planification of further activities where collaborative workflow is expected. Another consideration has to do with the audio and video documentation of the concert, which ended up being quite poor compared with the overall experience of the live concert. Because of budget limitations and the overwhelming juxtaposition of tasks, the existing recording lacks sound quality and doesn’t portray the interaction between the audience and the space, an important factor to observe when analysing the application of *musicalization of soundscape* practices.

Where to go next?

The plan is to continue exploring the good practice of *musicalization of soundscapes* in different contexts, exploring areas of intervention in performance and pedagogical environments. Also, the project acknowledges political, sociological, and ecological dimensions, subjects to delve into in further research. By critically examining these aspects, the project has the possibility to navigate ethical subjects, striving to create inclusive and accessible musical spaces.

Regarding the performance setting, there is motivation to expand the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project into three different concerts based on the size of the ensemble. With this approach, I intend to create separate full concerts for **solo**, **small ensemble**, and **big ensemble**, deepening the content of the compositions by exploring the limitations and diversity of the groups.

When considering the pedagogical context, I intend to establish a clear foundation for a series of performances based on the concept of the **Sound Promenade Project**, embracing soundscapes from diverse parts of the world. The exploration of this approach has the potential to contribute to:

- Environmental awareness programs.
- Community engagement projects whose actions rely on creative processes to empower communities by harnessing creative content.
- Multi-disciplinary artistic groups in search of inspirational material for artistic creations.
- Promote awareness of the sonic environment among music students from various educational institutions, including schools and academies at all levels.

To further develop this idea, I find it essential to create a set of guided exercises to be exposed in a workshop setting or compiled into a handbook, containing descriptions of practical approaches.

Closing remarks

The concretization of the Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project stands as an achievement that transcends my individual self. It represents a significant milestone in my

artistic journey, reflecting the very essence of my creative identity. At this moment, the project serves as a tangible embodiment of my artistic aspirations, providing a secure haven for the expression of my musical concepts and artistic visions. It has become a sanctuary where my artistic ambitions merge seamlessly with reality, fostering an environment where creativity knows no bounds and leads to an enriching and transformative artistic experience.

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Appendix

Consent

Template of the artistic research consent for use of personal data. All signed consent forms have been archived and are in possession of the artist-researcher.

Consent for use of personal data
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Helsinki
2023



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Consent for use of personal data

Consent to participate in the research: Porto Helsinki Sound Promenade Project – A way for musicalization of soundscapes

I have understood that participation is voluntary, and at any point in the research I am at liberty to notify the researcher that I no longer wish to participate in the study.

- ☐ I want to participate in the artistic research as an expert/artist/composer, and I want the information to be published including my name.
- ☐ I want to participate in the artistic research project anonymously.
- ☐ I give permission related to the law of copyright to use my piece of art/performance as a part of the research.
- ☐ I give permission related to the law of copyright to show my piece of art/performance publicly.
- ☐ I want to be identified as the author of my piece of art/performance
- ☐ I want my piece of art/performance to be published unnamed.

I have received sufficient information about the research project. I have understood the information and I wish to participate in the research study.

Signature of research participant

Print name

Email address

Researcher's Contact details:
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