

Editorial

by Miriam Akkermann

When talking about performing music, the focus is usually set on an audible realization of sonic ideas within a physical space – a concert hall or performance location. However, this physical space has been extended by means of media in various ways on acoustic but also on visual levels, e.g. with the integration of audio recordings, video footage, and real-time implementation of audio-visual processing. With the developments in digital networks and the growing bandwidth for online-streaming, new possibilities opened up to extend concerts and performances to performers and listeners who are no longer necessarily physically present at the concert venue.

Latest since the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic at the latest, complete musical performances in virtual space have become a new normal. With this, also performances in what can be called ‘hybrid space’ are emerging. While mostly being defined as emerging from the blending of physical and digital spaces, hybrid spaces also refer to spaces meant to be used for a simultaneous variety of functions (deSouza e Silva, Campbell, Ling 2025). Hereby, online and mobile socially networked spaces

and real-world places are connecting and converging in numerous and complex ways. A key question is how these layers of technology/media and social behaviors can change how we interact, how it affects the characteristics of presence in space but also, what kind of more subtle changes appear with regard to temporality and social behaviors.

Within the realm of musical performances, this leads to several questions: How do new forms and formats for performing music in hybrid spaces look like? What do their structure, new possibility but also probable restrictions mean for performing music and the music performed? What does change for composers, performers – and the audience? How does the very same performance change when being perceived in real, hybrid and virtual space? What does “presence” mean in these different settings?

The interdisciplinary and international Symposium “(Virtual) Presence!?” Musical performances in hybrid spaces” explored these questions and was especially interested in bringing together perspectives of humanities research disciplines such as musicology and theatre studies and artistic positions from composers and performers on the staging of the performance, the

aspect of co-creation, the role of music technology, and intended, desired or neglected effects for the audience.

The Symposium took place on July 17th and 18th, 2024 at Freie Universität Berlin, and was organized together with students from the MA Music, Sound, Performance at FU Berlin.¹

This issue presents texts that have been created after the symposium, reacting and reflecting on the discussions at the event, but also extending on connected and ongoing research projects in music research and music practice that explore the boundaries of musical performances in various new spatial settings. It hereby directly links to the issue *Array2022* “Space. A frontier”, which provides a slightly broader perspective on the topic.

Notes

[1] A full program with abstracts is available under www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/we07/musik/Symposium-Virtual-Presence/Final-Programmheft.pdf (24.10.2025).

The symposium and the concerts were enabled by the funds of the Ernst-von-Siemens Musikstiftungsprofessur at Freie Universität Berlin held by Miriam Akkermann.



Figure 1. Poster of the Symposium

References

deSouza e Silva, Adriana, Scott W. Campbell and Rich Ling (2025). „Hybrid Space revisited: from concept toward theory“, *Communication Theory* 35 (1), pp. 14–24, DOI: 10.1093/ct/ctae023.

Issue *Array* (2022) “Space. A frontier”, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25370/array.v2022>.