

Practices of Everyday Life | **Cooking**

Navid Navab

av performance | culinary concert
gestural sound compositions
for chef & enchanted kitchenette - 2015

DESCRIPTION

A performance organized around a chef, an enchanted kitchenette, and sonified ingredients.

The cook wields foods, pans and spices, transmuted gesturally into spatialized sound and painterly light. A knife rasps against another, onions vocalize their unfolding mutation into a cacophonous a cappella, sizzling oil slides into a downpour of Bartok-pizzicati, while seductive aromas immerse the viewer in a multi-sensory augmentation of everyday practices. Practices of Everyday Life | Cooking reflects Navab's continued interest in the enactment of dynamic performative ecologies that allow for poetic and virtuosic improvisation with computationally enriched matter.

"Practices of Everyday Life | **Cooking**" is a *Comprovisational*¹ performance that focuses foremost on poetic gesture-sound correlations and sonic *Gesture Bending*². While the performance flows as one continuous event, sections emerge from culinary tasks to form poetic tableaux. Each tableau is a unique gestural sound composition—a synaesthetic texture study—and each composition undertakes a technical and phenomenological reconsideration of basic notions such as score, instrument, performer, and the musical event at whole. Gestures mimicking sonic affordances and sound events interactively shaped under gestural contours feedback one into the other, breaking standardized dualities such as analog-digital, performer-performed, instrument-score, or intention-noise. The act of performing music then emerges freely from open engagement with matter, borrowing elements from "play", day to day living, and the movement arts.

¹ Comprovisation = Compositional techniques for exploring blends between fixed composition and free improvisation with interactive performance systems.

²Gesture Bending, a generic term coined by Navab, refers to the poetic transformation, prolongation and enrichment of gestures through technical mediation of movement – in this case through the incorporation of real-time sound instruments and computational matter. The goal of Gesture Bending is to continuously enact persuasive conditions for the transformation of the discursive networks of meaning production in the embodiment of movement. It can for example lead to the signification of an empty gesture or the abstraction of an inherent signifier (ie. within a beat gesture). Pervasive Gesture Bending can lead to the emergence of multidimensional compositions and the creation of conditions that invite inhabitants to synergistically improvise with a hybrid expressive force.



Making the imperceptible palpable, Navab leverages cutting edge gestural sound research and acoustic sensing techniques to symbolically charge everyday actions and objects in ways that combine his musical design with the performer's contingent nuance. Throughout the concert a multitude of performance paradigms are evoked and reinvented through these gestural sound techniques allowing the composer to retain an aesthetic nostalgia for and yet mash many sonic many realms such as ritualized sound art, music actuelle, dronscape, glitch, microsound, music concrete, muzak, and plunderphonics.

"Cooking" is the first part in a series of projects exploring how everyday gestures can become computationally charged with symbolic intensity and used for improvised play. Future projects include an augmented surgical theatre, a concerto for a barber and enchanted hair, a percussion piece for a masseuse and cyborg flesh, as well as various real life interventions in public places.

Performing Materiality / Materials Performing:

In *Practices of Everyday Life | Cooking*, my approach to instrument conception is based on a careful consideration of the coupling of tactile and sonic gestural action across the layers of physical and computational material³ in coordinated dynamical variation. When designing new instruments with everyday objects I have found it productive to move away from the purely mimetic conception of digital performance systems and classic paradigms such as that of composer, score, instrument and interpreter. My approach not only considers the materiality of the instrument, but leverages it as a computational substrate. Matter does not distinguish between performer intentions and material physics; the same holds for computational matter. I employ this inherent symmetry to design for arbitrary associations of agents doing arbitrary actions. This allows me to deterministically orchestrate the musical event at large while allowing for the inherent indeterminacy of such accidental events as a piece of carrot rolling on the table to contribute profoundly to the composition. Under these circumstances gestural meaning, intentionality, expressivity, and musicality freely arise from the context established in the moment of performance together with the apparatus of expectation.

In the case of instruments based on contact microphones and manual engagement with augmented physical objects, the textural and resonant nature of the physical material becomes a central component for consideration, along with the kinaesthetic gestural interactions that are conditioned through the spatial and material structure of the object. For example, a vibration isolated wooden surface with an evenly distributed textural roughness, enough acoustic conductivity, and a balanced impulse response is ideal for transcoding a wide range of gestural manipulations carried out via human skin, nails, and light objects. Such an instrument will transmute gestural interactions across a wider timbral spectrum, and thus provides an optimal platform for the continuous differentiation and distinct amplification of subtle changes in the process of haptic-sound feature extraction. This enables the participants to rely solely on their felt engagement with real matter and in the process discover and invent a their own repertoire of meaningful gestures and nuance with physical consistency between action and sound.

³ "Material Computation" refers to the non-digital processes of computation that happen in physical materials that do not follow the logic of a finite state machine. Computational Matter are materials that exhibit inherent computational properties.