

*Anna Magyary:* Even though one didn't notice immediately the *Instrument of Troubled Dreams* upon entering the Oude Kerk, through the unique sound compositions the work powerfully transformed the entire church interior and the way visitors perceived it. How did the Silence concerts during the exhibition engage with the spatial qualities of the Oude Kerk?

*Jacob Lekkerkerker:* It was a very articulated choice of Cardiff and Miller to have the mellotron in the choir, which personally surprised me at the beginning. In the overall space of the Oude Kerk, there are two ways for me to experience it: as a whole and as compartments. And the feeling of compartments gets stronger in the Sebastiaanskapel, the choir, the Mariakapel, and some of the smaller side-chapels. The idea of one space is stronger when you think in terms of long axes, West to East, North to South. So when we first talked about the *Instrument of Troubled Dreams*, I imagined a piece that is present in the entire space. So their choice was a surprise. But when they installed the work and started to play it, it sounded in two spaces: the space in the choir where the speakers were around you and there were also some speakers outside of the choir. There was already an idea of playing with the inside and outside already in the installation. A singer was singing in the Mariakapel and a dog barking outside the church, at the cafe. The juxtaposition of the spaces had a really strong effect. They used the choir as their main point of focus but they used some satellites. What worked well is the use of surround sound. The initial idea was to engage with the exhibition with each Silence concert through a different angle as we usually do. But since the mellotron was such a peculiar musical instrument, we came up with the idea to form our own orchestra. And let's see how this orchestra can move. So the first time in the history of Silence concerts, I was one of the main musicians which I am usually not. This way we could explore the musical instrument in space more in-depth and use the experience of one concert and bring it to the next.

*AM:* Yes, the concerts indeed started to work like some sort of laboratory.

*JL:* We started with four musicians but throughout our concerts, the orchestra expanded. First, we just improvised in the choir space and used it also as a public space with people moving around us. The choir was the basic space but we did the same thing as the mellotron. We used some sounds outside the choir, passing through the choir. So we were thinking of the mellotron being like a dom with circulating ambisonic sounds. Outside of the dom, we had some satellites that we made use of in the second concert. The audience was encouraged to respond to it, and think of the choir as the centre of focus and explore the side-rooms, like the Mariakapel together with the musicians, and walk around. Before every concert, I informed the audience how they could potentially experience the space and listen to the concerts. The last

concert was inspired by the idea of the superimposition of different musical layers. You can play different musical pieces at the same time, which is the mellotron at its core, it is the superimposition of sound, you make many things happening at the same time. So we wanted to that in space with live music. It already happened in the second concert when a Sweelinck piece came out from the mellotron at one point but it also sounded live. What happened in the choir from the mellotron intruded into the Sweelinck piece, making some provocations. But it was still within a time frame. But in the last concert, we made two different worlds of sound coming together: the orchestra was playing James Tenney, and I was playing the mellotron. This was the first time when we used all the space since we also used the organ – the first time since its restoration. This was my initial thought of the mellotron and in the end, it happened in the last concert.

*AM:* Cardiff and Miller's work has narrative elements, even though there's no fixed narrative order or sequence, it still invites the beholders to discover and compose stories as they sit in front of the mellotron. They could be reminiscences of stories from the past or imagined scenarios in an apocalyptic future. Did the concerts also bring into play certain narrative elements?

*JL:* There were beautiful stories recorded in the mellotron. One very often comes back to me: the idea of a cathedral space being upside down floating on water, a fantastic image. Also the image of stepping in the snow in a winter morning, a lot of strong narrative elements. I used them in a collage way to get snippets. Some of them continued if you started a key not too long afterwards. Because the story gives such a strong direction to how you listen, in every concert I gave the story some kind of suspense. I was thinking let's not bring in the story too soon. We ended one of the concerts with a story, and it became the turning point, so everything that happened before the story became a prelude that led to the story. That was one technic. When you have one voice - it was always the voice of Janette, of course, and you have multiple stories at the same time coming from every corner of the room, it becomes mind-blowing. I used little weights – seven or eight of them – and put one on one story that would continue while bringing the others gradually into play. Because if you have only one story it fixes the listener's attention into one direction but when you start to layer it opens again. In music, this kind of abstract experience always tries to keep a distance from the content, because I don't want people to attach too much to the words. The words are part of the story but I don't want the music to illustrate the words. When people get too comfortable with the narrative then I tried to find ways to disrupt it. Then you have a more open relationship with the story than if you only dictated it pressing only one key at a time. The listeners could come to the church and press the keys themselves if they were interested in the stories. But when we were

in a concert, we wanted to give room to the complexity of the work, when there is a different hierarchy between the elements.

*AM:* Maybe this leads to further questions about the role of the musician in orchestrating this experience. One might call the *Instrument of Troubled Dreams* a democratic artwork: it comes to life only as the beholder plays the mellotron and creates his or her composition. In this way, participation is key and it enables everyone to contribute equally. When a musician sits down to play the instrument does this quality change? How did the concerts involve the listeners?

*JL:* That was a difficult question to answer in the process of preparing for the concerts. I thought if we were going to work with it we would do it as a collective. The concert is a collective experience, it is subjective but always informed by the others. There is a tension between these subjective experiences, the ways of being together in the space and positioning yourself, choosing the ways you behave which also changes the perception of the music and the performance. A concert is a lot about co-creation between all the energies which are there. Every little element of the concert matters especially when people are encouraged to walk around the space and respond to the experience. So if we were to create a democratic experience, we had to think of the mellotron as what creates this collective experience and not only as an instrument that one person is playing who is good at it. And so I thought we could do it without a problem.

*AM:* Can you tell a little bit more about how the *Instrument of Troubled Dreams* or the *Silences* informed the concerts that have taken place in the Oude Kerk ever since? How did they shape your thought when you organized concerts during other exhibitions afterwards?

*JL:* First, I think the play between the inside and outside became very decisive in the later concerts. Secondly, it was the way the mellotron worked with samples, it brought into play different worlds at the same time and created the superimposition of different elements triggered something in my mind which I was dreaming about for a long time. It was something that I am doing in my music when I am playing with some sound elements on my laptop preparing my CDs. It has a funny effect when you play one element like a piece of Bach and all of a sudden you play something very surprising on top of it. It is like what the Dutch would call "vloeken in de kerk", cursing in the church, meaning that something is out of place, that you're not supposed to do, you're touching something sacred. But the way the mellotron used samples, often from different worlds that not supposed to be together made me very free. I was asking myself: if I was interested in spatial music why does it always have to be linear. So the mellotron freed me from a linear way of thinking. Having different perspectives

was already in the DNA of the Silence series but it was still a linear perspective, I think. Sometimes we did little experiments with playing things at the same time, but these concerts opened new possibilities. We were remixing. Appropriating pieces, taking elements out of their context and place them in a new one. This conceptual thinking echoed in the later concerts. Seeing if we can do these perspectives within one group of musicians.