

"Space" interview by Ada Ragimov

What was the main idea line that guided your interpretation? +What can you tell me about the choices you took during the process?

In retrospect, I think I had two preliminary avenues of approach to Adaya's beautiful and intriguing piece: On the one hand – looking at the graphic notation, almost in the same way one would look at a painting, and on the other – looking at the details in the piece, focusing in on the different textures and specific graphic elements.

Looking at the whole of the piece, a general "vibe" emerged as well as an immediate emotional impact – it felt dark and ominous but at the same time naive and wonderous. It reminded me of the atmosphere in the book I was reading at the time – "Orlando", by Virginia Woolf. Both pieces seemed to have an elusive quality, as if they held within them mysteries and riddles that in their own worlds were plain truths.

The more granular approach, meanwhile, outlined the structure and helped with specific ideas – graphic elements became maps for sound creation and images were slowly translated into notes, harmonies and playing techniques.

While each point of view served an important role, it was the connection between them that was most interesting to me. The simultaneous double outlook (macro-micro, near-far) made reading and interpreting the piece feel very much like a game of hide and seek – at times the "big picture" would obscure the details, and, conversely, one specific element would sometimes grow so big in my mind that it would take over the entire field of vision.

This feeling of playing a game while playing my instrument led me to incorporate the text from "Orlando" in my performance of the piece. The text talks about the attempt to hide a very solid truth under the comforting veil of vagueness. There is a dark mysteriousness in the text, but the style of writing is a bit whimsical, almost mischievous. I loved that the text mirrored the feeling I got from the aesthetic of the notation, and I loved the thought that much like the unavoidable truth in the text, some musical truth would emerge from my interpretation, whether I intend it to or not.

Can you point on one or even two examples of your interpretation to a simile that rose from the notes? +Which instruments did you choose to play in your work and why?

Other than the harp, the instruments I used in my performance were: a chopstick, a pencil, a phillips screwdriver and a baglama pick. Each was used to create a specific sound that was inspired by elements in the notation.

The small “flying” lines scattered throughout the notes reminded me of confetti and were the inspiration for the sound of the chopstick rapidly moving between two strings, at times sounding like an accompanying Qanun, and at times like a strange vessel or insect taking flight.

The thick “wooden” texture of the piece’s through-line, situated around minute 3 in the time axis, looked to me like something between a tree trunk and an octopus’s tentacle. This image inspired the sound of the pencil hitting individual bass strings, ricocheting, and creating secondary hits.

The ink blot between minutes 4 and 5 in the time axis looked to me like a storm cloud or a cigarette burn and was the inspiration for the sound of the sharp-edged baglama pick disturbing the reverberation of the bass strings and causing a long, clear and intrusive buzz. This precise buzz “grows” to be a messier multi-string double-pedal buzz, as suggested (in my mind) by the smear of the ink-blot.

The falling squiggly lines ending in small circles reminded me of strange shooting stars, or small “pings” of light one sometimes sees from the corner of one’s eye. They inspired the sound of the screwdriver sliding up and down the strings, creating a sweet and awkward sound that made me smile every time I played it. This motif is later morphed into harmonics, a more wholesome pingy sound – the butterfly to the screwdriver’s cocoon.