

LULL Performance Instructions

Pre-performance notes:

Before performing LULL, come up with a few short (3-8 note) motifs to base your improvisations around and repeat throughout the piece. These should be familiar feeling melodies for your hands to play - you should be able to let go of your concentration on your hands and meditate while repeating the motif.

Before the performance, connect your EEG headset to your computer and open the associated Max patch to make sure the data is flowing as expected. It should receive the alpha band power and trigger MIDI out, changing MIDI note value when the alpha power goes over the set threshold. Some values may need to be changed before or during the performance as EEG signals can vary depending on the electrode location and skin conductivity.

Open the Ableton file and set both tracks to start monitoring. This will be the output of the piece - the drone will be live monitoring of a MIDI instrument, and the saxophone will be processed with Ableton effects.

Performance instructions:

Begin by leading the audience in a box breathing exercise around 60 bpm. Box breathing is “in 4 - hold 4 - out 4 - hold 4.” Repeat until the audience seems calm and will continue without your counting. Then begin the saxophone improvisation. Start softly and calmly, and throughout the first few minutes introduce the motifs decided earlier. Adjust the threshold in the Max patch to be close to the peak values you see of your alpha band power. Being nervous for a performance can change your typical readings. Once a drone note is triggered, play in the key of the triggered note, relating it to the previous drone notes. Play in the style of how you are feeling in the moment - if you feel tension within yourself, repeat a melodic or rhythmic idea until it is worked out. You should always try to relax and reach a flow state with your playing. As the piece continues, try to lose yourself in the atmosphere further. Turn up the reverb and delay time (and feedback amount) in Ableton. Remember to leave space to breathe and to listen to the processed sound ring out in the space. When you feel that you have attained a peak concentration level and flow state and have less to add to the room's conversation (around 8-15 mins into the piece), start ramping down in volume. Introduce some clicks and pops with your keys, and blow through the instrument without creating a voiced note. This brings back the idea of breathwork and will help you and the audience become more grounded in the room. Once the room's reverberations die out, bring down the volume of your interface and bring the saxophone to a relaxed position to signify that the piece has concluded.