

Briefly on Halldorophones

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The Halldorophone project creates an intersection or hybrid of instrument-objects. The sound of the strings is picked up, amplified and retransmitted back into the body of the instrument thereby causing the strings to vibrate further. The result is a virtually endlessly sustained sound. Visually, the unique instrument objects are appealing, not least for the strangeness of the brutal integration of the speaker cone into the instrument itself, making them part instrument, part speaker.

At first glance the Halldorophone instruments seem to belong to the contemporary tradition of the use of feedback in music. Electronically amplified sound re-amplifying itself over and over, resulting in an ear-wrecking scream has traditionally been considered an unwanted side effect of the controlled amplification of an acoustic signal in concert, feedback has however found its place in contemporary music and constitutes its own field of artistic exploration. By nature feedback is unpredictable and unstable, it appears as a violent sonic force and once released can, at best, only be partly controlled. A prominent example is Jimi Hendrix shoving his electric guitar into the Marshall cabinets, creating a trademark impression of the violent, uncontrollable nature of the electrical guitar through feedback. Toshimaru Nakamura's work with the 'No-input Mixing Board', where the signal output of the mixer is fed directly back into the mixer, uses the feedbacking system to create an astonishing variety of sound-qualities. Composer Alvin Lucier has examined feedback in pieces such as 'I am Sitting in a Room' and the installation 'Empty Vessels', where feedback which includes the acoustics of a room creates a vibrant space that is both sonic and architectural. The Halldorophone#5 as a modification of an existing string instrument (the cello), in a way, follows the tradition of experimentation with the phenomenon of feedback. However, conceptually a much longer tradition of musical instruments is addressed with the project. The Halldorophone directly targets the process of what is electro-acoustic. It works with acoustics within the tradition of (pre-electric) hollow-bodied string-instruments and then integrates the process of pickup



and electrical augmentation of the acoustic resonance into the resonating body itself thereby creating the possibility of an endless reflection of the acoustic signal.

Now the question of the use of the instrument arises. A traditional acoustic instrument is played by the trained movements of the instrumentalist. By virtue of an intimate understanding of the resonant behavior of the instrument, the skilled instrumentalist is able to extract a wide range of sounds from the instrument body. The electronic amplification of the sound is traditionally only a secondary process that serves to amplify the existing qualities. With the Halldorophone, however, the process of amplification is paradoxically integrated into the sound-making itself. By playing the instrument the unstable feedback-process is triggered. The acoustic sound is played back into the instrument itself and an endless electro-acoustic loop is created. The instrument creates a feedback-reflection of its own sound – a reflection that can not be played in the strictest sense but only partly controlled.

<http://www.halldorulfarsson.info/halldorophone5>