

Be Your Own Rain God

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1 PROGRAM NOTES

In this captivating audio-visual installation, participants are invited to step into the role of Rain Gods, creating and controlling their own thunderstorms through two interactive modes, while subtly engaging with an underlying environmental theme. This is a companion piece to the performance "When the Rain God Sings, Storm Lions are Born".

This installation allows individuals to craft their unique storms using an electric Taiko (Roland's Taiko-1). Here, the force and rhythm of their drumming directly influence the visual and auditory intensity of gathering storm clouds, leading to the climatic release of rain. This mode not only entertains but also subtly educates participants on the delicate balance of natural forces and the impact of human actions on weather phenomena.

There is an option for 'Precision-Play', offers a more structured experience. Participants attempt to replicate a specific musical phrase, simulating the challenge of succeeding an ancient Rain God. This mode highlights the precision and responsibility involved in managing natural resources, drawing parallels to the careful stewardship required in environmental conservation.

This installation, a companion to the live performance 'When the Rain God Sings, Storm Lions Are Born', allows participants to immerse themselves in the art of playing an electronic Taiko (Taiko-1). A Taiko is a Japanese Drum. This installation demonstrates how a traditionally non-pitched instrument can be transformed into a dynamic, multi-pitched, and multi-layered tool. This is also an immersive experience of the added skills needed to deliver this additional pitched aspect of the Taiko-1.

Both modes of the installation provide an interactive platform for exploring the relationship between performance, technology, and the natural elements. Participants are not just engaging in a musical experience; they are also stepping into the shoes of a Rain God, gaining insight into the intricate interplay between human actions and environmental responses. This installation aims to offer an enlightening, immersive experience that blends artistic expression with environmental awareness.

Keep an eye out for the accompanying performance "When the Rain God Sings, Storm Lions are born".

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2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Background

The spirit behind Rain Gods is one of adventure and exploration of what a Taiko can be when it becomes an electronic instrument. In Japan, a Taiko is a drum; performances are often accompanied by stories, movement and percussive rhythms. One of the key challenges of the composition was expanding what was possible from a single soloist performance while addressing the performance tradition of the Taiko including playing techniques. New drumming techniques and compositional possibilities were created for Roland's Taiko-1 (Electronic Drum). The installation seeks to immerse the audience in an interactive tapestry, inviting them to explore the nuanced layers and appreciate the precise playing techniques needed by the performer to perform the piece. It is an invitation to witness the metamorphosis of a traditional instrument into a dynamic, electronic entity, forging a captivating bridge between heritage and innovation.

2.2 Overall Experience Description

In the NIME installation, participants interact simultaneously with both drum surfaces, activating sounds and visuals through various modes. The auditory output can be experienced through speakers and/or headphones. Two primary modes are featured in this interactive experience, easily switchable by participants: **Mode 1:** Users engage with the performance platform, creating a dynamic musical storm. The player's input influences a mix of storm sound effects and musical instruments, offering a visually and musically satisfying experience. This mode is designed for simplicity, accommodating players of varying drumming skill levels. **Mode 2:** Participants replicate a musical phrase on a pre-prepared score, playing a defined melody on the drum. This mode also produces music visual effects; however, it requires a bit more precision in both musical and rhythmic aspects, offering a slightly less forgiving challenge to participants.

2.3 Relevance to NIME

The project was developed in response to the diminishing opportunities for travelling performance groups as venues themselves became vulnerable during pandemic related economic challenges. We feel that the future developments for Taiko-1 are important as this was a democratisation of skills. Taiko players are no longer limited to performing non-pitched instruments and ensemble style playing opportunities are possible for soloists with careful interactive compositional techniques. This installation was developed as an extension of the performance for potential drummers and players to experience this expansion of compositional and performance possibilities – musically driven by a creative re-contextualisation of traditionally linear Digital Audio Workstation (Logic Pro X)

3 PERFORMANCE NOTES

Equipment

- Laptop: power outlet 1x Mac; 1x PC
- Taiko-1 – 10 x AA rechargeable batteries

Audio speakers

- Projector Screens/ LED screens Projector (if using projector screens)
- Related Connectors

See Fig 1 for set up.

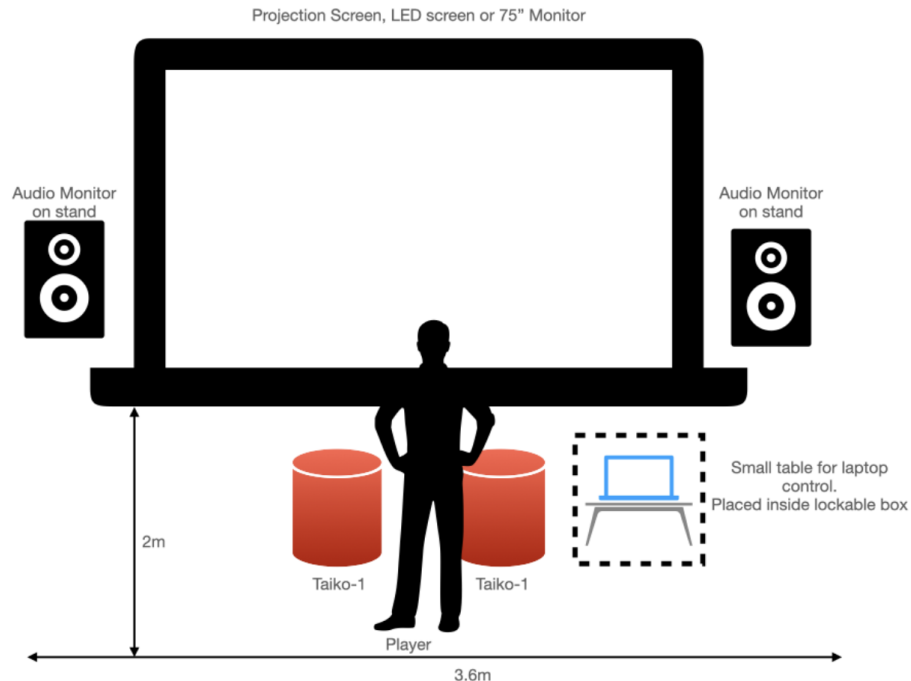


Fig. 1. Proposed Install Setup

3.1 Technical Requirements

The installation is proposed for a more intimate setting, potentially for the performance dinner. Below is a guide to what is needed, however, we anticipate further communication and fine-tuning once the performance is programmed.

Audio Setup:

- Stereo DI out of MacBook Pro to audio desk for audio triggered by the Taiko 1 3 x monitors for stage fold-back

Video Setup:

- Connected Mac to PC via ethernet cable for sending MIDI signals

Spatial considerations:

- Minimum 3m wide x 4m deep
- Ideally rear projected on a large screen (6m wide) that addresses the floor

- However, we can work with a front projected flown screen or screens if required. LED system also possible. Hi res projectors required. To be confirmed closer to date.

4 DURATION

Estimated engagement time 3-4 minutes for a complete experience.

5 MEDIA LINKS

- Video: <https://vimeo.com/942206916/761cb98da1>

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ETHICAL STANDARDS

The ethics approval process has been conducted and approved with ethics board within the University of Technology Sydney.