

No-gos Incidents  
Malfunctions Errors

Do you have a story to share?  
Please send it to [noinmaer@proton.me](mailto:noinmaer@proton.me)  
more info – [chihauccisoilconte.eu/noinmaer](http://chihauccisoilconte.eu/noinmaer)



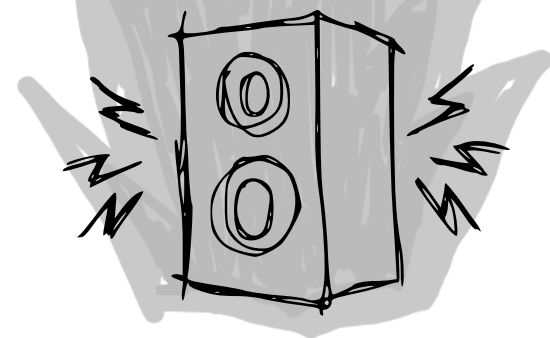
Project supported by the Computational Media and Arts  
trust of the HKUST-GZ - [cma.hkust-gz.edu.cn/](http://cma.hkust-gz.edu.cn/)

No-gos, Incidents, Malfunctions and Errors is a project  
by Yuri Kuzmin , 陈心然 (Xinran Chen), 顾文清 (Gu  
Wengqing) and Nicolò Merendino (aka Chi ha Ucciso Il  
Conte?)



Note: this is a 2-sided volume, flip it to get  
more juicy content. Scan the QR code for  
specific instructions on how to fold and flip  
this piece of paper

No-gos Incidents  
Malfunctions Errors



An Encyclopedia of Failed  
Performances



The artist, upon visiting, declines the setup.  
He builds the tank himself: a small  
container, no plants, no accessories. I point  
out that the fish are not known for  
tolerating cramped cohabitation. He is  
unmoved. He takes full responsibility for the  
installation, a fact I receive with some relief.  
Predictably, they spend more energy  
fighting with each other than responding to  
the visitors. Not all of them make it to the  
opening in one piece. Someone contacts  
the animal protection authorities. A local  
newspaper runs a story about it. Although  
the festival has brought several hundred  
international artists and researchers to the  
city, with performances and installations  
across multiple venues, the newspaper  
finds only one thing worth reporting.

## Editorial

Dear reader, welcome! This is the first volume of No-gos, Incidents,  
Malfunctions and Errors: An Encyclopedia of Failed Performances

Our intention with this project is to offer a platform for those musical  
performances that went wrong for whatever reason. Over the past  
months, we have been receiving (and continue to receive) stories from  
all over the world. We have laughed, cried, and reflected while reading  
them. Then we arranged them into a sort of order and created this  
encyclopedia.

The stories you will find here are all anonymous for obvious reasons,  
unless the artist who sent them explicitly asked us to publish their  
name.

Our goal is to establish an ongoing conversation about what can go  
wrong during a performance and to provide space for those  
experiences that are (almost) never spoken about except in one-to-one  
conversations between individuals. We hope that from now on, if a  
performance goes badly, an artist can say in relief, "Sh\*t! My career is  
probably over, but at least I'll be featured in the Encyclopedia of Failed  
Performances."

Enjoy your reading. In this volume of the encyclopedia, we explore the  
letter "A," for "Atrocity" and "Affirmation." You will read the story of an  
audio interface based on an animal (spoiler: it ends badly), as well as  
Lauren's introspective misadventure involving 32- and 64-bit  
architectures conflicting with each other and wreaking havoc on her  
setup.

So enjoy the journey, prepare the tissues, and fasten your seatbelts..

An artist proposes an installation for our  
music technology festival: a tank of weakly  
electric fish — a species that discharges  
electricity when disturbed. The project  
assumes that visitors approaching the tank  
would trigger the discharges, which would  
then be captured and converted into sound in  
real time.  
The proposal lands on our table and is  
immediately voted down - by me, among  
others, on both ethical and practical grounds.  
It is accepted anyway. As luck would have it, I  
am the one tasked with setting up the  
installation. I arrange for a large, professional  
aquarium, with the appropriately exotic (and  
appropriately expensive) fish obtained through  
a specialist supplier.



Atrocity  
[uh-tros-i-tee] / ə'trɒsɪti /

An atrocity is an act or condition of extreme cruelty, brutality, or  
wickedness, often referring to violent acts committed against civilians  
or prisoners during war. It signifies an appalling, inhumane action, such  
as murder or torture, characterized by intense violence and disregard  
for human life.

I've been performing improvised live electronics with the instrument I slowly been evolving for nearly twenty years. This is a complex and intentionally unpredictable system that combines analogue synths, drum machines, voice and vocal processing hardware, along with controllers—including, most recognizably, a game controller—that I use to feel my way through everything, and a lot of digital signal processing and audio analysis using the graphical programming language Max.

In 2018, after playing at MOOGFEST earlier that year in Durham, North Carolina, I was invited back to play a unique one-off event that the organizers were putting together called **HUMAN & THE MACHINE**, in collaboration with the Azru, a US-based association that integrates the arts and research in higher education.

The event was held at the Georgia Theatre in Athens, Georgia, a 1000-capacity venue with an incredible sound system. The place was packed and the crowd was buzzing and seemed totally up for whatever the evening was going to offer.



Photos: Jason Thrasher.

The concept of improvisation is probably the closest way of describing how I think about music: as something responsive, embodied, and relational. Identifying as an improviser allows me to smash together notions of in-the-moment creation, sound production, as well as my instrument's design and the 'in-action' exploration of it.

It also conveys the idea of music-making as necessarily involving others, whether as collaborators, audiences, fellow listeners, or via somatic collective experiences through dancing and moving bodies.

This account of my 'failed performance' describes a scenario that will always stay with me as affirming these ideas and my practice.

Author: Lauren Sarah Hayes

I started my set with some low-frequency pulsar tones, feeling out the theatre with small gestures, getting a sense of how my instrument could respond to the space,

what it could do, how it sounded. I nudged my thumbs' position on the game controller, which instantly shifted things to a different timbre—lower frequencies still.

even more bass—and the audience immediately responded as I serendipitously hit some of the resonant frequencies of the space: the whole room felt like it was shaking.

It was thrilling and we all felt it. I remember thinking in that moment that it was going to be an exhilarating set. I was just getting started.

As I started to move into different sonic territory, I noticed that some of the synchronicities that typically occur with my instrument—a sharp vocal transient triggering a drum machine, for example—weren't ringing. I kept going, trying to think through what might be going on, all while hoping to maintain and transform the energy that had kicked off the set.

I generally don't need to touch my laptop when I'm playing, and fiddling with a trackpad and peering at the screen is the last thing I want to be doing when I'm trying to perform. However, I decided to take a look at the code, and noticed a whole string of red error messages in the console. **WTF.**

I test my code thoroughly and consistently before getting on stage. I don't get bugs, or, if I do, they are ones that I am aware of and can live with—i.e. stably perform with—until I'm in the right mindset to get a working x. A whole host of code externals hadn't loaded; bits that were crucial to what I felt was some of the magic of what I could do with this instrument. I brought things to a resolution, quickly restarted my code, and began again: same problem.



I've written **elsewhere** about the myth of the 'immersed virtuoso improviser'. We musicians are expert world builders, and often we music, in public, on a stage, regardless of what is going on in our bodies or social/personal lives. But it's not compartmentalization: we can use it, lean into it, and if we're lucky transform ourselves and maybe some others that come with us in the process.

We also often perform highly technical actions that aren't always about producing sound and that require deep focus and involve **joint attention**. But in a similar way, instruments fail, strings break, power goes out, and we find a way to continue, all while either trying to maintain some kind of aesthetic flow, or responding to the disruption in an artistic way.

Electronic and digital musical systems are exciting to me, but they aren't a special case.

In that moment of failure, I decided—with a calm that surprised me—that I had two options:

1) run off the stage, or 2) accept that I was an improviser and get on with it. And I made it though. It wasn't what I had wanted it to be. But it was something else.

It wasn't until the next morning that I worked out what had caused the technical failure: something so specific-related to 32 vs 64-bit architectures and another project I was working on—that it would never happen again.

But the failure was the real crux moment for me. And, at the same, a complete affirmation. ■



**Affirmation**  
[af-er-mey-shuhn] / ,æf'ər'meɪ'ʃən /

An affirmation is a positive statement, declaration, or assertion that something is true, often used in self-help to encourage, motivate, or build confidence. It signifies approval, support, or a solemn declaration, acting as a mental tool to rewire thought patterns and reduce stress.