

# Reconnecting a large audience with the emotions of classical music.

EPFL+TECAL LAB

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PRESS RELEASE

FESTIVAL

RESEARCH



# Reconnecting a large audience with the emotions of classical music.

At the heart of our cultural heritage, classical music holds the harmonic foundations of contemporary music. However, it often only reaches connoisseurs. So how can we awaken the interest of a wider audience and create a strong emotional bond? Developed by the EPFL+ECAL Lab, *Praeludium* is designed to foster the perception of classical music, particularly among a neophyte public. Produced in collaboration with the Swiss Radio and Television RTS and the Acousmatik association in Fribourg, this immersive installation will make its first public appearance at the International Festival of Sacred Music (FIMS) in Fribourg, from June 29 to July 7, 2024.

Audiences of classical music are declining and growing older in Western countries. How can we reconnect with this music, which has been one of the main cultural vehicles over the centuries and whose benefits for listeners have been widely studied? Resulting of two years of research work carried out at the EPFL+ECAL Lab, the EPFL's design research centre, the *Praeludium* project demonstrates a disruptive approach. The designers, researchers in digital interaction, engineers and psychologists worked regularly with musicians to create an immersive experience that meets this challenge.

This experimental installation uses sound, light and emerging technologies to enhance the particularities of a musical recording, such as its timbre or texture. Comprising a 3D sound system with a double ring of loudspeakers, eight luminous steles and a digital music stand, it makes it possible to emphasise musical texture through patterns, timbre through colours associated with emotions, and different groups of instruments through the acoustic device. *Praeludium* involves experienced musicians to offer a new form of mediation with the public.

The EPFL+ECAL Lab conducted a series of evaluations of the installation with different audiences following procedures from applied psychology. The aim was to understand the cognitive and emotional impact of the installation's features on the perception of classical music. The observations show a significant influence, particularly on emotion. One of the most salient facts is that alone, the presence of visual patterns actually reduces the hedonic connection with the music due to a higher cognitive load. But when colours are added to the patterns, the phenomenon is reversed and the whole experience is enhanced. These observations provide, rich learnings for future projects and show great potential for the promotion of classical music amongst new audiences.



↑ *Praeludium* (image © EPFL+ECAL Lab / Marvin Merkel)

The installation *Praeludium* will be presented to the public for the first time at the International Festival of Sacred Music in Fribourg. This project is part of a series of works by the EPFL+ECAL Lab dedicated to revival of digitised heritage and cultural mediation, with a considerable international impact. The *Chronogram* installation, for example, has recently been translated into English, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin and Thai, and is currently being installed around the world.

#### CREDITS

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## Acousmatik.land



#### ABOUT THE EPFL+ECAL LAB

The EPFL+ECAL Lab is the design research centre of the EPFL/Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, founded in 2007 in cooperation with ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne. Exploring the potential of emerging technologies through design, it tackles the related challenges by combining artistic creativity, scientific knowledge and the ability to assess user perception. Working on concrete projects, the EPFL+ECAL Lab collaborates with many companies, museums and institutes. With its expertise in design, engineering, architecture and psychology, it creates novel concepts and turns them into functional prototypes.

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↑ *Praeludium* (image © EPFL+ECAL Lab / Marvin Merkel)



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#### PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The immersive installation *Praeludium* will be presented to the public at the International Festival of Sacred Music (FIMS) in Fribourg, from June 29 to July 7, 2024.

[fims-fribourg.ch](https://fims-fribourg.ch)

[epfl-ecal-lab.ch](https://epfl-ecal-lab.ch)