

A guide to the exploratory online version of the opera *Im Bau*

Abstract

The website imbauprojekt.ch is an online platform dedicated to the opera *Im Bau* composed by Michel Roth. The opera premiered in 2011 at Theater Basel under the direction of Georges Delnon and was later re-staged as a radio opera for the 150th anniversary of the Musik-Akademie Basel in 2017. This production was accompanied by a multi-layered artistic research project resulting in an online tool that allows users to explore the artistic, spatial and conceptual dimensions of the work in an innovative digital environment.

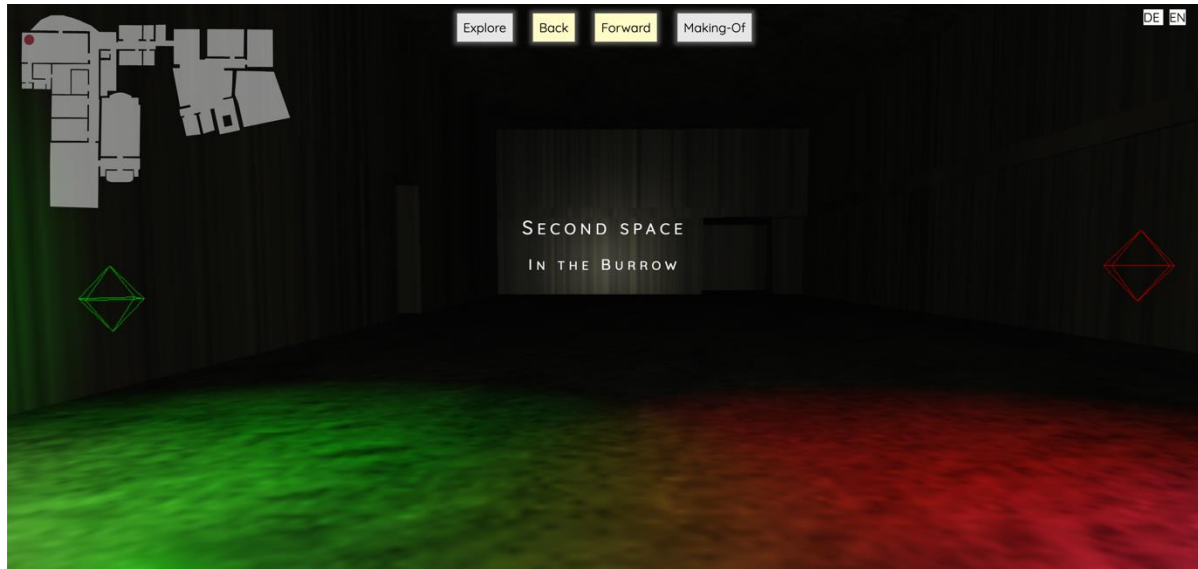
Overview of the Opera

Im Bau is inspired by Franz Kafka's unfinished novella *Der Bau* and explores themes of existential unease and self-isolation. The narrative mirrors the obsessive process of creating and securing a space: "Im Bau" means in German "in the burrow" or "under construction"—a central ambiguity in Roth's opera which is structured along 15 "Klangräumen" (sound environments). Its blend of artificial soundscapes, site-specific acoustics, and innovative staging creates a unique mixture of music theatre and imaginary soundwalk.

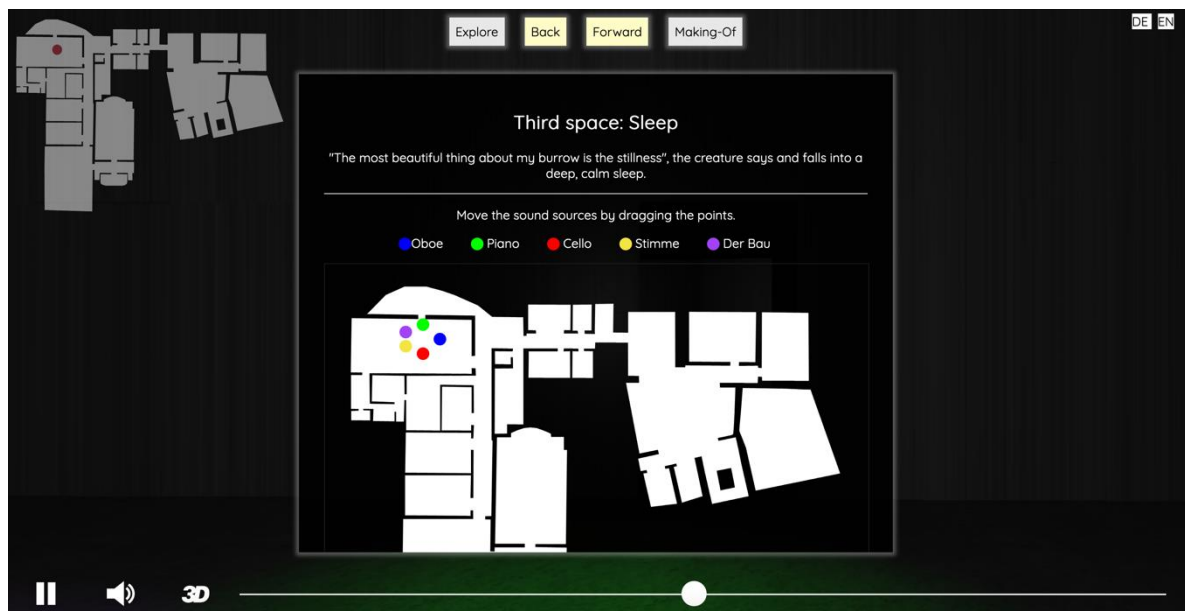
For the radio opera version, the ensemble *æquatour* performed across 53 stations at the Musik-Akademie Basel, including concert halls, cellars, and freight elevators, integrating real ambient noise from the building under construction. The production captured binaural and multiperspective audio, which was later refined into a radio opera through extensive postproduction led by Holger Stenschke and his team. This version was published by WERGO and complemented by the interactive website imbauprojekt.ch.

Features of imbauprojekt.ch

1. INTERACTIVE EXPLORATION: The website transforms *Im Bau* into an interactive digital experience, inviting users to navigate the opera's narrative, spatial soundscapes, and musical structures. Users can virtually traverse the work, modify listening perspectives, explore the score, and even create their own parcours through the 15 "Klangräume".



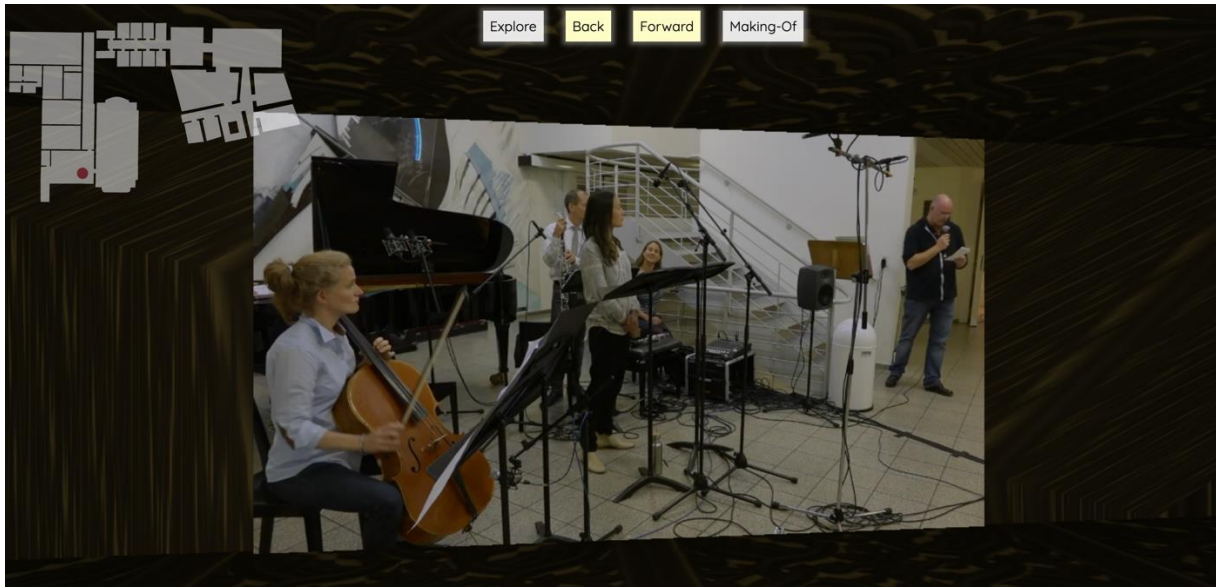
2. MULTIMEDIA CONTENT: The platform integrates various media to provide user with a multi-layered insight:
 - Audio clips: Excerpts from the opera provide insight into its sonic layers.
 - Video documentation: Fifteen videos by Lysann König and Linus Weber capture the creative process and production details.
 - Musical score excerpts: Accessible segments of the score allow deeper analysis of the composition.
 - Dynamic visuals: The website's design reflects the opera's themes, enhancing the immersive experience.



3. 3D AUDIO AND KLANGGRÄUME: Each "Klangraum" is based on a unique interplay between live performance, electronics and acoustics. The virtual modeling is the main feature of the website using 3D audio simulations that enable users to explore the spatial

complexity of *Im Bau* individually. This innovative interactivity bridges aesthetic exploration with technical advancement in binaural rendering.

4. RADIO OPERA DOCUMENTATION: The radio opera version of *Im Bau* was recorded on-site at the Musik-Akademie Basel. The website provides detailed documentation of this process, showing how infrastructural and acoustic elements influenced the production. Users can explore how the radio opera's spatial storytelling was realized as a real parcours through the different buildings of the campus.



5. MUSICOLOGICAL INSIGHTS: Antje Tumat's essay on the history of the radio opera situates *Im Bau* within this genre's evolution. Her analysis, accessible on the website, provides a historical and conceptual framework for understanding the mutual influence of music theatre and radio opera.

Research Team

Composer and Research Concept: Michel Roth

Dramaturgy: Stefan Fricke

Ensemble æquatuor:

Anne-May Krüger (Mezzo Soprano)

Matthias Arter (Oboe and Lupophon)

Martina Brodbeck (Violoncello and Singing Saw)

Ingrid Karlen (Piano and Melodica)

Matthias Würsch (Singing Saw)

Live Electronics: Ueli Würth

Sound Engineering and Postproduction: Holger Stenschke

Assistant Sound Engineer and Postproduction: Justin Robinson

Postproduction: Jeroen van Vulpen

Web Development: Hannes Barfuss

Video Documentation: Lysann König and Linus Weber

Musicological support: Antje Tumat

Artistic and Scientific Findings

The online platform reflects *Im Bau* as an interface between artistic exploration and technical innovation. Through its design, it addresses:

- Potential in the media translation and representation of a music theatrical work.
- Perspectives of a hybrid staging based on site-specific and virtual foundations.
- Advances in 3D audio rendering as an expressive and interactive tool.
- The historical and conceptual development of radio opera as a relevant model for today's digital solutions.

These findings position the project as a best practice for making complex music theatre works accessible in new, digital formats and to a new audience.

Conclusion

The website [imbauprojekt.ch](https://www.imbauprojekt.ch) reimagines the opera *Im Bau* as a living digital experience. It illustrates the methodical application possibilities of a 3D audio simulation in the acoustic re-staging of a musical theatre work. By merging artistic documentation, technical exploration, and scholarly contributions, the website serves as both an archive and an experimental and educative tool. The project exemplifies how digital platforms can preserve and expand the reach of a music theatrical live performance in a sustainable way.

Links

<https://www.imbauprojekt.ch/>

<https://www.schott-music.com/en/im-bau-no385084.html>

<https://www.fhnw.ch/de/forschung-und-dienstleistungen/musik/hochschule-fuer-musik-klassik/publikationen/im-bau-web-app>

