

Benoît Maubrey  
Performances with Electroacoustic Clothes

Audio Geishas  
and  
Asian Themes





**AUDIO GEISHA**  
ICC-NTT, Tokyo 1997.  
Electroacoustic Kimono, sampler and photoresistors

### **THE AUDIO GEISHAS.**

In 1997 I was invited to Tokyo to prepare a series of the Audio Ballerinas' performances at the Intercommunication Center (ICC-NTT). While shopping around in a local department store I came across some dolls wearing extravagant robes and playing interesting looking guitars and small drums. I was informed that these were Geisha dolls wearing kimonos. This is how the idea for Audio Geishas came into my head. It was an even more logical idea than Audio Ballerinas (who had come from the "solar" idea) because these dancers actually played music: it made sense that they should also wear electroacoustic kimonos.

The next step in the process was to find the electronics for the dress. To be honest, we find all the parts for our clothes in surplus electronic parts catalogs: the digital memories, I believe, are left over from end-of-line Korean or Chinese productions for talking dolls or answering machines. In fact, it is accurate to say that we use modern garbage to create our electroacoustic clothes: most the electronics we use can also be found in the toys that litter a ten-year-old's playroom. Whenever I consider building a new art work I first look inside bargain bins at local electronic shops. In Tokyo there is a whole city area (Akihabara City= Electric City) where they sell only such products. Accompanied by a local electronics expert, we searched through the alleys and narrow shops until we found pretty much what I was looking for: a Casio Voiceman. This unique instrument is a sampler with a small keyboard that allows the user to sample live sounds and pitch them with the keys. Back in Berlin I hatched a plan with Manfred Thiem to cannibalize the instruments and replace the keyboard with light sensors that were spread out over the Kimono so that external lighting would trigger the sounds as the Audio Geishas moved. I also purchase a small portable guitar amplifier that we fitted into the traditional belt ("obi") section of the clothing. Additionally we equipped them with acoustic microphones, infrared sensors, radio receivers and guitar jacks so that they could fulfill other audio tasks. The premiere of the Audio geishas took place at the Intercommunication Center in May 1997 with a follow-up performance in the streets of Akihabara City. We had the Geishas produce feedback through their microphones and amps, which was then recorded by the Voicemans and subsequently pitched and triggered via their light sensors. Interestingly enough the result sounds remarkably Japanese. Later in Berlin we developed a series of performances at the legendary SO36 nightclub where the GEISHA choreography was build into a full fledged stage act using up to 24 spotlights and strobe effects.



## AUDIO GEISHAS

Electroacoustic Kimonos

### AUDIO GEISHA

Belziger Kunsttage, 1998

Electroacoustic Kimono, sampler, and photoresistors.

**KOREAN THEMES**  
Electroacoustic Hanboks



**AUDIO HANBOK**

Seoul Performing Arts Festival, 2001.  
Electroacoustic Korean wedding dress,  
light-to-frequency controller, sound filter.



**AUDIO HANBOK**

Seoul Performing Arts Festival, 2001.  
Electroacoustic Korean wedding dress,  
light-to-frequency controller, sound filter.





**MISS NAM Performance**

Thailand New Media Art Festival/Bangkok, 2004.  
Thailandese costume with electroacoustic Tutu,  
electronic sounds triggered visa movement sensors.



**Audio Thai Duo.**

Thailand New Media Art Festival/Bangkok, 2004.  
Thai costume with electroacoustic Tutu,  
electronic sounds triggered visa movement sensors.

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