

Chapter 5. Meeting 5, Workshop: Performance and Improvisation

5.1. Announcements

- Class meets next week on Tuesday and Wednesday!
- No tutorial due on Tuesday

5.2. Listening: Supersilent

- Listening: SuperSilent, “5.1,” 5, 2001

- Listening: SuperSilent, “6.2,” 6, 2001 [PhonCD P Sup76 sup6]

5.3. Reading: Cook: Principles for Designing Music Controllers

- Cook, P. 2001. “Principles for designing computer music controllers.” *Proceedings of the Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression*.
- Why is programmability is a curse?
- What is meant by saying that some players have spare bandwidth?
- Why is it valuable to make a piece, not an instrument or controller?

5.4. Reading: Trueman: Why a Laptop Orchestra?

- Trueman, D. 2007. “Why a Laptop Orchestra?.” *Organised Sound* 12(2): pp. 171-179.

- Are there good reasons for calling an ensemble of laptops an orchestra?
- What makes PLOrk different from other laptop orchestras?
- What makes PLOrk different from other laptop orchestras?
- How does distance and spatial orientation affect performance practice? Are these differences changed with electronic instruments?
- What are some approaches to overcome the lacking visual elements of a laptop-orchestra?

5.5. An Ensemble, not an Orchestra

- No hierarchy of instruments
- Non-uniformity in equipment
- Improvisation and performance at the foreground, not recreating fixed works
- Performer-directed, rather than conductor-directed
- The orchestra is an old historical European organization; our practice derives from other musical traditions and ensemble compositions

5.6. Approaching Experimental Music and Improvisation

- All musical ideas made with integrity are valid (not necessarily aesthetically pleasing, but valid)
- Attention and seriousness is required; humor happens, but is subtle
- A shared sense of creative opportunity (Ballou 2009)
- Communicate with body and instrument: do not speak, ask questions, mumble, or apologize (musical exclamations are possible)
- No undo or redo: make it work (mistakes are opportunities)
- Less is often more; louder is not better

5.7. Mono Performance B (mgSynthNoiseFilter)

- Eight different noise textures on buttons 1-8
- Y1: amplitude; Y2: AM modulation
- X1: high pass filter; X2: low pass filter

- D-pad 1 (left): slow echo; D-pad 2 (down): fast echo; D-pad 3 (right): long reverb;
- Ideas
 - Can create gestures with filters X1 and X2
 - Can create fades and rhythmic articulations with Y1 amplitude
- Cautions
 - Moving Y1 greater than .5 will result in a boost that may peak
 - Careful with Y2: excessive AM is not desirable

5.8. Exercise: Pass-the-Gesture Solo

- Load: mono performance-b.test.pd
 martingale/pd/instruments/dualAnalog*/mono/performance-b.test.pd
 SynthNoiseFilter
- Performer A: Create a memorable musical gesture, lasting between 5 and 15 seconds
- Performer B: Re-create the musical gesture of Performer A, not necessarily using the same sound source, but maintaining temporal and spectral outline.
- Continue process from performer to performer, moving around in a circle

5.9. Exercise: Pass-the-Gesture Ensemble

- Load: mono performance-b.test.pd
 martingale/pd/instruments/dualAnalog*/mono/performance-b.test.pd
 SynthNoiseFilter
- Ensemble: Create a subtle, low frequency background texture, contributing a small bit to the total sound
 Performer A: Create a memorable musical gesture, lasting between 5 and 15 seconds; repeat it twice, with variable space in-between gestures.
- Performer B: Re-create the musical gesture of Performer A, not necessarily using the same sound source, but maintaining temporal and spectral outline.
 Ensemble: Continue

- Continue process from performer to performer, moving around in a circle
- Variation: Performers A and B selected in pairs: A and B in a dialog or argument
- Variation: Performer B responds to A not in similarity, but maximal contrast, producing the opposite idea

5.10. Poly Performance B (mgSynthBuffer8, mgSynthBuffer8)

- Eight different samples buttons 1-8
- Y1: amplitude; Y2: LPF resonance
- X1: NC; X2: low pass filter cutoff frequency
- D-pad 1 (left): slow echo; D-pad 2 (down): fast echo; D-pad 3 (right): long reverb;
- Poly
 - Instrument 1: percussive tones, lower on keys 1-4, higher on keys 5-8
 - Instrument 2: longer, lower tones on keys 1-4, long, ambient samples on keys 5-8
- Ideas
 - Can create gestures with filter; can pick out pitches with resonance of filter
 - Can create fast and short articulations
 - Can create fades and rhythmic articulations with Y1 amplitude
 - Can create spectral fades by bringing in low-pass filter slowly
- Cautions
 - Releasing a key closes the envelope; striking a key always start it at the beginning
 - Careful with Y1: samples have large dynamic range
 - Careful with Y2: excessive resonance can distort

5.11. Exercise: Pass-the-Rhythm Solo

- Load: poly performance-b.test.pd
 martingale/pd/instruments/dualAnalog*/poly/performance-b.test.pd
- Performer A: Create a memorable musical rhythm, lasting between 5 and 15 seconds

- Performer B: Re-create the musical rhythm of Performer A, not necessarily using the same sound source, but maintaining rhythmic, temporal, and spectral outline.
- Continue process from performer to performer, moving around in a circle

5.12. Exercise: Eight On / Eight Off

- Load: poly performance-b.test.pd
martingale/pd/instruments/dualAnalog*/poly/performance-b.test.pd
- Ensemble: Articulate 8 beats in-time, on major beats or divisions (not necessarily uniform)
- Ensemble: Silence for 8 beats, or short rhythms or gestures in-time within 8 beat span or less
- Repeat

5.13. Exercise: Pass-the-Rhythm Ensemble

- Load: poly performance-b.test.pd
martingale/pd/instruments/dualAnalog*/poly/performance-b.test.pd
- Ensemble: Articulate a regular pulse by articulating a simply 4 or 8 beat pattern
Performer A: Create a memorable musical rhythm, lasting between 5 and 15 seconds
- Performer B: Re-create the musical rhythm of Performer A, not necessarily using the same sound source, but maintaining rhythmic, temporal, and spectral outline.
Ensemble: Continue
- Continue process from performer to performer, moving around in a circle

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