PLOrk

The Princeton Laptop Orchestra
Spring 2011

works by
Collington
Early
Iglesia
Mattissen
Narveson
Ness
Snyder
In Line

Jascha Narveson

Slip

Michael Early

What-A-Note

Jeff Snyder

Schiomatics

Alex Ness

<Performed by Ben Siegfried, Jeff A. Snyder, Griffin Telljoann, Victoria Tan, Carl Thumann, Sheery Xu>

<Led by Jeff Snyder and Michael Early>

=============Intermission=============

Lathyrus

Paula Matthiesen

Is Space

Blake Cazzington

24 Axes

Daniel Iglesia

<Performed by Zeerak Ahmed, Dodo Buettner, Alex Getson, Christina Hummel, Adrielme Joy, Simon Krauss, John Moziris, Karis Schneider>

<Led by Daniel Iglesia>

=============End=============

---[In Line - Jascha Narveson]---

In Line plays with different tempos, letting players move a stream of pulses through faster and slower speeds. When players intersect, interesting things happen.

Jascha Narveson is a Canadian composer living in New York. He's studied a bunch of different kinds of music in a bunch of places, and has had a bunch of music commissioned and premiered by a bunch of people in a bunch of countries, some of whom have even released it on CD. He urges the curious to visit his website at www.jaschanarveson.com

---[Slip - Michael Early]---

Slip was originally inspired by kazoos, but I'm honestly not quite sure how to describe what it's turned into. The six laptop performers in PLOrk see themselves and each of their fellow performers on their screen as six differently colored spheres, which they move around by sliding a joystick up, down, left, or right. Their position controls the speed of their notes and sounds, and they quality of the sound they produce. Each performer receives text messages on their screen that give them general instructions - including what pitches to set on their computers and how to behave in relationship to their fellow performers. Sometimes, for example, they are all instructed to 'flock' and follow one player's sphere - red, yellow, etc. - as one single-minded group. At other times, they must be 'loneers' and avoid all contact with their neighbors.
Special thanks go to Jeff Snyder and all of the PLuZk performers - Griffin, Victoria, Shezy, Jeff, Carl, and Ben - in helping turn this into something (hopefully) fun.

Michael Early will happily use any technique or tradition he can wrap his head or hands around. He is particularly interested in the intersections between Western concert music and Rock music, and between acoustic and electronic instruments. He has written music for traditional Western orchestration, electronic laptop orchestras, acoustic chamber groups, percussion, cello with electronics, and electric guitars. With violinist Angela Early, Michael plays electric guitar and composes for the duo X10. He is also a member of the laptop-based group Sideband, a collective of performer-composer-programmers. Michael is currently finishing his doctorate in music at Princeton University.

---[Whac-A-Note - Jeff Snyder]----------------------------------

Whac-A-Note is both a musical composition and a multi-player video game. By playing the game, the performers create the music. In the creation of the piece, I sought to balance game-play design goals with musical intent and compositional considerations.

Each player in the game uses a Manta, a controller I designed. The Manta has 48 hexagonal sensors which represent pitches. In the normal mode of play, if a sensor lights up red, it is a note that the player should hit. Correct hits produce pitches, mistakes produce noise. The players receive a click track over headphones for tempo information, and the score achieved by a correct hit is based on how close to the beat the note was hit. All notes must be played one at a time, creating an arpeggio texture, and the direction the arpeggio should go is indicated by LEDs on the Manta every time a collection of notes is presented. Playing notes in the wrong direction scores no points.

There is also an alternate play mode, which I call the Noise Race, which occurs occasionally in the piece. In this mode, every sensor touch is worth 1 point, and the players race to get as many points as they can. However, as soon as one player reaches a certain score, the race ends, and the game immediately enters the normal mode of play.

There are two Power-Ups in the piece - Melody Notes and the Slider Bonus. If a sensor lights up amber, that means that it's a Melody Note, and the performer can touch it and hold it down for at least 2 seconds to get a bonus. The Slider Bonus is a power up that becomes available once in a while and passes around the ensemble. If the Slider Bonus is available, it is indicated by an LED on the Manta. This means the player has the option of turning up a slider to receive five times the normal score for any correct hits while the Slider Bonus LED remains active. It also affects their sound, modulating it with another oscillator of random frequency, to produce a more discordant timbre.

You can follow the "pole position" of the players by watching the 3D video generated from the game data. You see a representation of each player's Manta, and their position moves to reflect their ranking based on their current score. The value of the slider (used to collect the Slider Bonus) pushes their image toward you in the z-axis.
Musical materials (chords, tonal centers, melodic pitches) are generated on the fly by a server computer, and is dynamically controlled by the actions of the players. Each performance of the piece will be substantially different.

Jeff Snyder is a composer, instrument designer, electronics performer and sound artist working in the New York City area. His work has been performed by a variety of ensembles, including the Ensemble Percussion Trio and the Wet Ink Ensemble. He has recently been working on writing music for an ensemble consisting only of instruments he designed and built. In addition to his concert works, he often collaborates with artists from other mediums, most frequently the visual artist Gandalf Gavan.

Jeff received his doctorate in Music Composition from Columbia University in 2010, studying under Brad Garton and robotics artist and Dorobot founder Douglas Repetto. His research focused primarily on producing acoustic sound through electro-mechanical or electronic means. He is currently the Technical Director of the Princeton University Electronic Music Studios.

He performs and records in an analog synthesizer duo with Sam Pluta, called exclusive01 (CD out on Quiet Design Records). He also plays modular analog synthesizer in an improvisational trio with bassist Katie Young and violinist Erica Dickes, and performs on a hacked 1980s pen plotter with Victor Adam in the Orchestekets. Jeff’s electro-country alter ego Owen Lake released his debut album in 2008, on the Layered label. He also founded and co-runs the Carrier Records label for experimental music with Sam Pluta and David Brynjar-Frønson. As a member of the Wet Ink composers’ collective since 2004, Jeff has written many pieces for the group and performed electronics on the work of several composers.

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Schismatics: Alex Ness

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—The Monkey Shakespeare Simulator

Alexander Ness is a fifth-year doctoral student in New York University’s Music department. His recent compositions include Thread Chorale, for the flute and violin duo Hot Air/Tight Strings: Akousmetria, a video score for six players (performed by Tom Blancarte, Nathan Davis, Peter Evans, Dan Peck, Meighan Scoops, and Katherine Young); and Gabydë, for computer animation and six-channel sound. Shruti, for solo viola, is available on the language of... a CD from quietdesign records featuring new music by young New York City composers. He also performs in the noise/drone band Glissando bin Laden, and can be heard on their CD, Drones levé Orange (Carrier Records).

As the recipient of a Beebe Fellowship in 2005, he travelled to Varanasi (Benares) to study tabla with Ramu Pandit and vocal music with Ritwik Sanyal. For three consecutive summers starting in 2006, he taught at the Walden School, a composition program for middle- and high-school students. As a historian of music theory, he studies eighteenth-century acoustics and its challenge to conventional harmonic theory; he is writing a dissertation on the harmony treatises of Leonard Hunter and Joseph Sauveur.
---[Lathybus - Paula Mathiesen]---

**Lathybus** is a structured, improvisatory, game-like piece modeled much like the choose-your-adventure books. The ensemble travels down various musical 'paths' in search of a suitable ending. Multiple endings are possible. Some may be expected, others sudden, and still others may be at times undesirable if not dangerous. The performers self-organize, interrupting the navigation of the score, until agreeing upon a path. Each musical choice is negotiated, a balance between coherence and surprise.

Paula Mathiesen is a composer, currently based in Brooklyn. She writes both electroacoustic and acoustic music and realizes sound installations. In addition to writing for a variety of different ensembles, she also collaborates with choreographers and theater companies. She has written for diverse instrumentation, such as run-on sentence of the pavements for piano, ping-pong balls, and electronics, which Alex Ross of The New Yorker noted as being "enthralling". Her work often considers discrepancies in musical space—real, imagined, and remembered.

Her music has been performed by Alarm Will Sound, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), orchestre de gorge, Ballett Frankfurt, notam, pandeuro, Kathryn Woodard, Diesel Lounge Boys, and Jody Redhage. Her work has been performed at numerous venues and festivals in America and Europe, including Merkin Concert Hall, MAK, Teatro la Carceri, Joyce SoHo, the Construction Company, Das TAF, the Aspen Music Festival, Bang on a Can Summer Institute of Music at MassMoca, Auralick Festival, the Guadalupe New Music Week, SEAMUS, NEWO, and the Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival. She performs frequently with the electroacoustic duo, Oui Oui (Oui Oui), Groundwave New Music Collective, Object Collection, and recently winter company. Awards include a Fulbright Grant, ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers' Award, First Prize in the Young Composers' Meeting Composition Competition, the MacCracken and Langley Ryan Fellowship. Mathiesen has also held residencies at create@Bard at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, STEIM, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts. Mathiesen recently completed her Ph.D. at New York University - Graduate School of Arts and Science, and is now teaching music technology at FIU.

---[Is Space - Blake Carlington]---

**Is Space** is a composition made of smooth-out loops of field recordings that are converted to rhythmic beats. Each performer chooses a source recording then creates various complex rhythms by manipulating a custom sequence. The sound's timbre can also be modified by expanding or shrinking the brief window through which the source recording is heard.

The piece is structured in seven phases, each with particular parameters. Within each phase the performer has control over the note-to-note details. The first few phases allow a small number of active beats in each performer's sequence, resulting in a general sense of spaciousness and non-rhythm. In phase 4, the performers must then try to match one other person's sequence. This initially results in a bit of a circular chase, since Performer 01 might be trying to match Performer 03's sequence, but Performer 03 might be trying to match Performer 02, and so on. Eventually an equilibrium is reached. Phase 5 instructs the performers to increase the number of active beats in their sequence, disregarding the
sequences of their colleagues. This results in the fullest and most polyphonic passage in the composition. From here, in Phase 6, everyone comes back together, shifting toward a single shared sequence.

Conceptually, the piece is grounded in a quote from philosopher Henri Lefebvre: "people don't act in space, peoples' actions define space."

Blake Carrington operates within the spheres of the visual, sound and media arts. His work in all of these forms is informed largely by cultural geography, landscape and architecture. The areas between these formalized spatial practices and the experiential qualities of sound and visual art are the main focus of his work. He is currently artist-in-residence at LMC’s Swing Space on Governors Island, and recently received a NYSCA grant in support of his debut CD release concert at the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral. He has completed residencies at HISP in Helsinki, Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, and Rustines lab in Montreal. In 2009 he received his MFA from Syracuse University. In Syracuse he co-founded the platform for outdoor projections called Urban Video Project, and last year co-curated a series for UVP featuring Trevor Paglen, Jill Magid, Thomson & Craighead, Miranda Lichtenstein and Jouze Feerste. His print series Loct., exploring the questionable translation of field recordings to abstract landscape imagery, is in The Drawing Center’s Viewing Program in New York. Blake was born in Indiana and currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

24 Axes builds upon the composer’s solo performance work for a single 3D oscilloscope. In that, the performer controlled three audio signals; one which plotted on the X axis, one on the Y axis, and one on the Z axis. Via the relative frequencies and shapes of the three signals, various forms take shape. These shapes are the literal representations of the sound, nothing more.

Now, each of the eight performers controls his/her own 3D oscilloscope. They follow a score that is being broadcast in real time to each laptop screen, with symbolic performance data traveling towards the performer in 3D space.

Daniel Iglésia creates music and media for humans, computers, and broad interactions of the two. His works have taken the form of concert works for instruments and electronics, live audio and video performance, generative and interactive installations, and collaborations with theater and dance. He brings ideas of computational aesthetics and elegance into both correlated electronic media and human performance.

His work has been presented throughout New York City in such diverse venues as Lincoln Center, Eyebeam Gallery, The Stone, Mecce Cunningham Studio, the Kitchen, Vestveldt Gallerie and many others. They have also been presented throughout the US and abroad, including the Experimental Media Series at the Hirshhorn Museum (Washington D.C.), ArtTech@The Lab (San Francisco), the Hamburger Klavierkongresse (Hamburg), the Guangdong Modern Dance Festival (Guangzhou), and the World Expo 2010 (Shanghai). His concert works have been performed by the California EAR Unit, So Percussion, the SEM Ensemble,
the Talea Ensemble, the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Oistrachka Bandai, and many others. He recently gave a talk on PLOk at the TEDx conference in Brooklyn.

(about PLOk)

Founded in 2005 by Dan Trueman and Perry Cook, the Princeton Laptop Orchestra, or PLOk, takes the traditional model of the orchestra and reinvents it for the 21st century: each laptopist performs with a laptop and custom-designed hemispherical speaker that emulates the way traditional orchestral instruments cast their sound in space. Wireless networking and video augment the familiar role of the conductor, suggesting unprecedented ways of organizing large ensembles. In 2008, Trueman and Cook were awarded a major grant from the MacArthur Foundation to support further PLOk developments. Performers and composers who have worked with PLOk include Zakir Hussain, Pauline Oliveros, Mátéos, So Percussion, the American Composers Orchestra, and others. In its still short lifetime, PLOk has performed widely (presented by Carnegie Hall, the Northwestern Spring Festival in Chicago, the American Academy of Sciences in DC, the Kitchen (NYC) and others) and has inspired the formation of laptop orchestras across the world, from Oslo to Bangkok.