025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I
Fall 2009
Assignment 3

1. Assignment 3 will be presented in class on Wed. Oct. 21. Previews of the assignment will be given optionally on Monday Oct. 19.

2. Discussion of sound masses.

3. Sound masses made from traditional instruments have the following considerations:
   a. Identical sounds, like violins
   b. Multiple sounds, like winds, or strings, or female voice, or mixed voices.
   c. Narrow pitch range, from 1 semitone to several octaves.
   d. Pitch intervals, from 1/8th-tone to semitones.
   e. Density, from 8 notes sounding at the same time, to 4-8 times that amount (discuss copy and paste technique).
   f. Register: static notes that are very low; or static notes that are very high.
   g. Glissandi: low to high; high to low; fan out; fan in; fan in/out while glissing up/down. Discuss why glisses at slow rate are more effective than fast glisses.

4. Sound masses in electronic music have the following considerations:
   a. See the considerations of sound masses with traditional instruments.
   b. Synthesized or acousmatic.
   c. Copies of sound files need to be slightly altered in: pitch (+/- cents), loudness (+/- 10 units), duration (+/- 10% of length), attack (+/- 30 milliseconds from beginning to peak); timbre, optional (brighter or darker, using EQ).
   d. How to achieve transparency.

5. How to compose a sound mass.
   a. Decide duration, which should be 4-8 seconds with flat pitch contour and static density to 6-12 seconds if density or contour changes.
   b. Decide register.
   c. Decide pitch span.
   d. Decide intervals.
   e. Decide pitch contour, if any.
   f. Decide what kinds of source sounds will be used.

6. How to make an acousmatic sound mass.
   a. Create 1-4 source sounds. Except for choral, organ, or other sustained sound masses, these should be 0.3-1.2 seconds in duration. Consider quickly fading out after the peak of the sound.
   b. Make 8-12 modified copies of these, as discussed in 4c, above.
   c. Place these into 8-12 tracks in Pro Tools and bounce to LFSM.1
   d. Make 4-8 versions of these, labelled: LFSM.1, LFSM.2, LFSM.3, etc.
   e. Make a new Pro Tools session with 8-12 tracks and import LFSM1…
   f. Place these files or fragments of these files into the edit window to create and control density.
   g. Make 4-8 versions of these, labelled: LFSMA, LFSMB, …
   h. Repeat the process above as many times as you wish, avoiding mechanical-sounding copies.

7. Present the following in class on Wednesday Oct. 21.
   a. A verbal description of each sound mass of its pitch intervals, span, and contour.
   b. 4 sound masses made of different source files and different pitch structure.
   c. Present the final version of each sound mass, as well as every bounce made in Pro Tools.
   d. Each sound mass should sound as unique as possible.

8. Consider the following ways to use these sound masses in your composition.
   a. As is.
   b. Radically pitch shifted.
   c. Possibly time shifted, but beware of artifacts and cliches. It is probably best not to spend too much time on this, if any.
   d. Eqed both to make the sound better and more transparent, and to create a radically altered variation.
   e. As sources for sound mining, where each file might range from 0.2-2.0 seconds.