

025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I

Fall 2010

Shading

1. Summary of Assignment 2.
 - a. Attacks that are audible.
 - b. Attacks that are felt but not audible in a compositionally significant way.
 - c. Tails that are audible.
 - d. Tails that are not audible.
 - e. All of the above can be used to shade any gesture, long tone, or fragments or components of those, as shown below.
2. Shading.
 - a. Shading is a technique sometimes used to situate a sound in a compositional or acoustic space, and to create the effect of a shadow around select components of a sound. It helps individual sounds seem less jarring and out-of-context in an electronic music composition.
 - b. To shade a sound in Pro Tools, find a complementary sound and align it with the original sound.
 - c. Use automated volume to bring up the level of the shading sound to a barely noticeable degree, as demonstrated in class.
 - d. There are many types of shading sounds, including:
 - i. Low sounds
 - ii. High sounds
 - iii. Pitched sounds
 - iv. Noise sounds
 - v. Sounds that are similar, perhaps even identical, to the original sound, but treated differently in temporal or spatial placement, pitch-shifted, filtered, or with reverb added.
 - vi. Sounds that are similar, perhaps even identical, to other sounds in the gesture or other compositional unit.
3. Consider the following in shading gestures.
 - a. Isolate and shade one or more individual components of the gesture. This will help create the illusion of depth and space in the overall gestures while maintaining clarity and immediacy in the non-shaded components.
 - b. If a component of a gesture is preceded by a crescendo shadow, a feeling of motion and activity can be imparted to the gesture.
 - c. For variety, try isolating several components of a gesture and copy and paste them to unused tracks. Add reverb to these tracks, then move them forward and backward in time while carefully using automated volume to keep things from getting out of hand.
 - d. A variation of Item 3c above is to radically filter or EQ the tracks before or after applying reverb.
4. Consider the following in shading long tones and sound masses.
 - a. Since the beginning and ending of long tones and sound masses are generally uninteresting in themselves, it will be useful to use a gesture, or part of one, at the beginning of these kinds of sounds. These gestures can be shaded as above in Item 3.
 - b. To shade a continuous sound, try adding other long-ish sounds in other tracks, then carefully shading them in with automated volume. Spatialization can be a very important component of this kind of effect.
5. Hits, also known as stabs, jabs, and chords, are very common in electronic music for their attention-grabbing abilities. Methods of shading these are discussed below.
 - a. Single hit alone. If it is not covered by other sounds, reverb might be necessary. If other sounds are present, reverb might mask those sounds, or be masked by those sounds. In such cases the reverb tail should be kept short.
 - b. Single hit with micro-crescendo attack (swooshes fall into this category). It is a very effective, if cliched way of introducing high energy into the moment
 - c. If micro-crescendos have a single, noisy source, they can easily sound like swooshes.
 - d. If a swoosh occurs, it can be masked by adding 1-3 pitched sounds, each with its own unique micro-crescendo.
 - e. Several notes or hits can be stacked together like chords. Make sure that these are slightly staggered or off-set in time to avoid a mechanical effect. The micro-crescendos of these sounds need to be closely rendered. The presence of tails of these notes will depend on what musically follows the chord.