

025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I

Fall 2010

Using Gestures, Long Sounds, Sound-masses, and EQ in a Composition.

1. Working with gestures from Assignment 3 in a composition.
 - a. Individual gestures can be used as recurring motives that delineate formal sections.
 - b. Gestures can be expanded from the inside out by moving sounds in the edit window of Pro Tools, creating more space, repetition, or longer sounds. Lengthening a sound may require some form of cross-fading.
 - c. A gesture may be book-ended to leave space for new or developed material.
 - d. A book-ended gesture may contain another, embedded gesture.
 - e. A gesture may be transposed non-rigidly (borrowing a term from math).
 - f. A gesture may be radically filtered so that only 1-3 sounds are heard. This is a good way to introduce or maintain an underlying sense of rhythm in the piece.
 - g. A gesture may be sound-mined, particularly where transitions occur.
 - h. Two gestures may be intertwined to create a more complex gesture.
 - i. Two gestures may be arranged to produce a call and response phrase.
2. Using long sounds from Assignment 3 in a composition.
 - a. Make many transposed copies.
 - b. Keep long sound relatively soft except for special moments at high volume.
 - c. Sound-mine long sounds to create shorter sounds that can be played individually or as tails to other sounds.
3. Using sound masses from Assignment 3 in a composition.
 - a. Sound-mining 1-3" sections of a sound-mass can be used to create small rhythmic motives.
 - b. A sound mass may be used with other sounds to create strong hits. For this, use automated volume.
 - c. Use micro-reverb techniques by placing 1-3 attacks in the sound mass in a different track, then adding reverb and spatialization.
 - d. Harmonize a sound mass by placing a pitch-shifted copy in another track. Consider whether to have these two tracks exactly in phase, or changing phases as done by George Martin on Lennon's vocal, as discussed in class.
4. Using EQ and filtering in a composition.
 - a. Deep bass sounds, 20 – 60 hz, should be used sparingly.
 - b. To make bass sounds stronger, copy and paste the sound in another track and transpose it up or down an octave.
 - c. Low sounds generally do not benefit much from reverb, so consider using a high-pass filter, then applying reverb to this.
 - d. The mid-range of recordings, 200 – 800 hz, tends to fill up quickly, due to the presence of high harmonics of low sounds and the low harmonics of the majority of other sounds. Consider "scooping the mids," as discussed in class.
 - g. If you like the effect of the mid-range, even though it muddies the overall sound, consider "surgically" lowering the automated volume of the regions in question by reducing the volume by one-third to one-half for as little as 0.5 seconds. This leaves the timbral space unaltered, while providing the listening with some relief from the over-bearing mid-range.
 - h. Upper mid-range sounds, 500 – 1,000 hz, can sound harsh, metallic, and ice-pickish. Long sounds in this range can be painful to listeners, as can be observed in audiences of electronic music concerts. Frequencies in this range often need to be reduced by 10-20%.
 - i. These must be EQ'ed very carefully by reducing the amplitude of these frequencies by no more than 20%.
 - j. High frequencies, 1,200 hz and higher, provide clarity, definition, and interest in the attacks of sounds. Sometimes adding a very high-pitched sound or very high-pitched high-pass filter at a very low amplitude can brighten and define a passage played by other tracks.