**025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I**

**Fall 2012**

**Recording source material for a fixed-media composition.**

1. Recording for a purpose.

a. Does the sound source carry an emotion?

b. Does the sound convey or represent meaning?

i. For voice, do the words say anything meaningful?

ii. Is the sound iconic, such as doorbell, siren, alarm?

iii. Does the sound work with others to paint a scene, such as traffic, sports game, battle?

iv. Is the sound personally meaningful, such as one’s pet, child, loved one?

c. What are the components of a sound that can be isolated and extracted?

i. Attack, sustain, end.

ii. High, middle, low.

d. Does the sound and/or its components hold promise for a composition?

i. Can it combine with other sounds to create a gesture, motive, melodic figure, rhythmic figure, chords,

sound masses?

ii. Can its components be extracted and exist as independent sounds?

iii. Does the sound lend itself to certain transformations, such as extreme pitch shifting, time expansion,

filtering, and spatialization?

e. Is the sound problematic?

i. Copyright issues.

ii. Muddy, ice-pick, very soft, embedded in a recording with other sounds that mask it?

2. Types of sounds.

a. Pitched

b. Inharmonic

c. Noise

d. Recording multiple instances of each type of sound will allow you to create a rich timbral landscape.

3. Matching sounds with transformations.

a. Low-pitched sounds can be pitch-shifted 1 or more octaves to produce a vastly different sound.

b. Low-pitched sounds can have the low frequencies removed with an EQ. This leaves the upper harmonics,

which could be normalized and pitch-shift down to put it in a useful musical register.

c. Sounds with complex attacks that are not too sharp, can be time-expanded.

d. Sounds with an interesting amplitude contour can be reversed.

e. Sounds that are sustained or have a slow decay, can be pitch-shifted and mixed to produce a chord or choral

effect.

f. Short sounds that are similar can be multiplied, as discussed in class, to produce a sound-mass.

4. While voice and instruments are time-honored sound sources in electronic music, also consider some of the sound

sources below:

a. Wooden sticks, such as popsicle sticks, wooden matches, branches, etc. These can be tapped on different

surfaces and can be broken to produce a very interesting loudness curve in the attack.

b. Rubber objects, such as balloons, kitchen objects, rubber bands, and children’s and dog’s toys have attacks in the 10-30 ms range.

c. Metal objects are known for their generally inharmonic sonic character. The attacks are often very short, but the decay can be very long. Consider applying an envelope that takes 200-1,500 ms to reach the peak.

d. Paper can be struck when pulled taut, torn fast and slow, crumpled, and folded.

e. Glass can be rubbed with wet fingers, lightly struck, and broken.

f. Jars of things like coins, unpopped popcorn, and marbles can be shaken repeatedly or just once. The result will be a mini sound-mass.

g. For all of the sounds above that are struck, make a test recording to test recording levels. A meter does not always show very short transients that can cause clipping or “digital overs.”

5. Record for the purpose of sound-mining. In general, single-attack, isolated sounds may be more useful than multiple-

attack mini-performances. Those should not be completely ruled out.