

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.