

Without Walls

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One of the ways I view my compositional practice is as a continuous line between
and

To play devil's advocate for a moment: in these days of mp3 and multimedia, musical creation seems to be easily seen by some as _____ for the global communication network. Music itself becomes information, and pressures on the notion of music as a spatial experience increase. Degrading technologies increasingly convey information apprehended in degraded

Having gone through composing periods that, in my opinion, led to pieces which didn't sound right, I think I am more aware now of some possible answers. However, my answers take the form rather of composer's rules of thumb, whereas I think Simon was driving at finding cognitive roots for this perceived rightness (I apologise for this evasiveness!). There are three issues I want to talk about. One is to do with another is to do with , and the other is .

Simon's question asks why Telemusik is 'successful in spite it's overt pre-conception' (ibid.), by which he means the use of formal rules and the Fibonacci series in particular to construct the work. In my own compositional practice, I've used similar means of construction. This kind of means has been called algorithmic composition (Landy 1994: 49), though this term can mean different things. For instance, it can mean something similar to Stockhausen's uses of temporal measurement; some rule could be used to organise notes into melodies and melodies into larger chunks, producing a score given to a performer to play later. But it could also mean, for example, using an iterative formula to produce grain streams with some common rhythmic-textural characteristic, and which subsequently become subject to transformations which might be performed intuitively in real-time. The first application governs what Jonty Harrison calls the architectonic structure, the abstract relation of sets of parameterised events to one another (Harrison 1998:119). The second rather generates sonic material that is then sculpted according to spectromorphological considerations. Harrison (2001) has also described this distinction in terms of music that deals with the quantitative and that which deals with the qualitative aspects of organising sound respectively.

My music employs both approaches. After a time, I've come, eventually, to a point where I can find a useful balance between the two, though I always try to keep in mind Leigh Landy's comment about algorithmic processes: 'make sure we can hear them.' (Landy 1994: 50). This is important if the process purports to be something that structures the work; the structure needs to be audible if we believe in Schaeffer's primacy of the ear.

My second rule of thumb concerns ; these can form anchors for the rest of the sonic material in the piece. I try to construct the piece so that at each point the material is moving towards or away from one or other reference point. The nature of such references might be association or mimesis, or in lattice-based music a particular harmony, rhythmic gesture etc. (in fact it could be any gestalt which is associated either with a real source or other similar established gestalts elsewhere in the work). In my work I tend to want to reveal these references gradually, or conversely, to obscure them gradually. In my soundscape pieces, this is the main forming process (for instance, in (1999), where the pitched bells of a distant clocktower gradually emerge from a swirling vortex of similarly-pitched granular streams).

Any discussion of

particular location interact with our imagination, perception and memory. Riversongs certainly functions in this way; the unadulterated recorded soundscape of the particular location or time appears fairly rarely, though those appearances are crucial as references. They act as narrative pointers and include the listener (including me as first listener) in the process of the piece, and they enable the piece to function as stimulus for an inclusive shared experience.

In conclusion, I would say that this concern for an inclusive experience is now my primary motivation as a composer, whatever form the compositional activity takes, and whatever means are used to create, sculpt and disseminate the sonic material.

Acknowledging the spatial experience of the spectator-listener is an essential factor.

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