The Poughkeepsie Ocean (2024)
Matt Sargent

For Paula Matthusen and the laptop orchestra of Wesleyan University

Any number of laptop performers
10 minute duration

Technical requirements (for each player)

- A computer with Max and the included Max performance patch: Sargent_ThePoughkeepsieOcean_PerformancePatch.maxpat

  The included patches "FFTRecorder.maxpat" and "FFTPlayer.maxpat" should also remain in the same folder as the performance patch.

- Independent/localized speaker system for each player.

- A basic microphone or field recorder.

Preparing the piece

- All performers should make five recordings of prominent hums or drones found in their environment. (Electrical hum, heat systems, building sounds, motors, transit, etc.)

- The recordings should each be at least a minute in duration.

- These recordings should be shared among the group and all players should load all hum sounds into the playlist of their Max patch. (i.e. - a 12 person ensemble will have a bank of least 60 hum sounds.)

About the patch

Tuning Dial

Tuning Dial is a highly idiosyncratic frequency shifter and timbre generator. "0" = 1:1 playback. Raising the Tuning Dial increases the frequency of the sound while also responding with a variety of harmonies, timbral complexities, and artifacts. Some sounds will be repeatable. Others will just occur spontaneously – to be enjoyed in the moment. Spend time in rehearsal exploring the tuning dial and discovering sweet spots that respond to your sound library.

Drone Bed and *Pitch Memory*

Drone Bed and Pitch Memory are two algorithmic tone generators that run automatically inside the patch from 5:00-10:00. The generators collect pitches/harmonies by listening internally to the Tuning Dial performance throughout the piece.

Hum/Drone Recordings

The hum recordings should be played continously by all players throughout the piece. The recordings will be heard in unprocessed form during the opening 30 seconds and then veiled by layers of frequency shifting (via *Tuning Dial*) throughout the rest of the piece.

Score

0:00-0:30	Play a recording from the bank of hum recordings, Tuning Dial at 0.
0:30-2:30	Slowly introduce the Tuning Dial. Select values from a range of 0-12, gradually altering the pitch/timbre of the hum. Focus on long tones: select a dial position, listen, and let it unfold for up to 30 seconds before moving to another.
2:30-4:30	Gradually expand Tuning Dial, select positions from 0-24. Rate of change between Tuning Dial positions and movement between hum recordings can be more varied. Find methods to use these parameters as an instrument.
4:30-5:00	Fade out "Tuning Dial" to silence, 4:30-5:00.
5:00-5:30	*Drone Bed* and *Pitch Memory* enter automatically at 5:00 and continue until 10:00.
5:30-6:00	Select position between 32-64 and fade in Tuning Dial again over 5:30-6:00
6:00-7:30	Then, full exploration: Tuning Dial range of 0-64. Search the recording bank for new experiences. Work as an ensemble to build a rich and diverse soundscape.
7:30-9:00	Focus on Tuning Dial positions 32-64, producing high-pitched spectra. Return to long tones.
9:00-10:00	Pick a Tuning Dial position between 32-64 and hold. Fade out the Tuning Dial to silence as the *Drone Bed* sine tones dissipate.