k.fn[s]+"a"

Harmonica and Electronics

Oliver Hickman

2017

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Reading the Score

k.fn[s]+"a" is a work of structured improvisation composed for someone possessing little to no knowledge of the harmonica. For this reason, instead of using a traditional notation format, I have opted to adopt a graphic structure in place of a score.

The X axis of the graph is a time scale in minutes. This does not have to be exact, but the player should be aware of their own limits as blowing air into the harmonica may cause lightheadedness.

The Y axis is an approximation of energy or intensity that comes from the electronic processing.

Numbers in circles indicate the preset number that should be active at that point in the piece.

Italicized words indicate what parameter of the processing is being affected by the motion controller.

I have divided the harmonica into 5 registers: Low (L), Mid-Low (ML) Mid (M) Mid-High (MH), and High (High). The abbreviations are shown on the score. In general, when and how much the harmonica is played is left up to the performer. An arrow between two letters indicates that the register should be shifted, over the course of several blows, from one to the other. A slash means that the player can choose any play between the two registers every time they play the instrument. A dash, however, shows that the player should play ONE glissando between the notated registers.

General Performance Notes

Because k.fn[s]+"a" was developed for non-harmonica player, there are no special skills or techniques needed to perform it. All they need to do is blow through the harmonica in the designated register, creating a major chord.

k.fn[s]+"a" was originally created to be played with a custom motion controlled developed for the Apple Watch called WOSC. The code for that app can be found here: https://github.com/okhick/WOSC. The Max patch that this composition is built in does not depend on WOSC and could easily be modified for any other motion controller should the performer wish.

The controls are currently set as follows: an impact should advance the scene. At times where there are motion controls active, a raising or lowering of the arm changes the pitch shift and delay feedback and a rolling motion of the wrist controls the highpass and lowpass filter cutoff frequencies.

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