

CNMAT Max/MSP Summer Workshop 2012

Lab Assignment 2

August 23, 2012

Summary

In this lesson, you will expand on the Theremin you built in lesson 1 by adding vibrato as a parameter that you can control with the Gametrak, adding a second voice, and adding distortion that increases with the volume.

Topics

Polyphony, encapsulation, abstraction, reuse, parameters.

Objects Introduced

[patcher], [tanh~], [times~], [plus~]

Relevant Tutorials

Basic

1. Encapsulation
2. Abstraction
3. Presentation Mode
4. Controlling Data Flow

MSP

1. Test Tone
2. Adjustable Oscillator
3. Wavetable Oscillator
4. Vibrato and FM

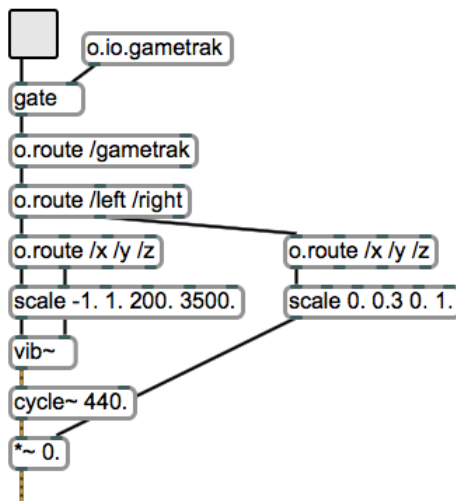
1 Vibrato

Vibrato is an expressive musical device that is created by slowly oscillating the pitch being played (Theremin virtuoso Clara Rockmore (1911-98) was famous for her beautiful vibrato). Of course, you can add vibrato by simply shaking the part of the Gametrak that controls the frequency of our Theremin, but since it takes many years of practice to be able to control smooth, even vibrato, we'll extend our patch to do it for us.

The `[vib~]` object takes two parameters (see the help file for a demonstration): (1) the frequency in Hz around which the output will oscillate (left inlet), and (2) a parameter between 0–1 that controls both the speed and depth of the oscillation (right inlet).

We'll wire the `[vib~]` object in between the `[scale]` and `[cycle~]` objects and control the speed and depth of the oscillation using the Gametrak.

1. Disconnect the `[cycle~]` object from the `[gain~]` object.
2. Connect the outlet of the `[scale]` object to the left inlet of the `[vib~]` object.
3. Connect the outlet of the `[vib~]` object to the left inlet of the `[cycle~]` object.
4. Connect the outlet of the `[cycle~]` object to the left inlet of the `[*~]` object.
5. Now connect the `/y` value of the left `[o.route /x /y /z]` object to the right inlet of the `[vib~]` object. Even though the controller is sending out values between -1–1, we don't have to change anything because the `[vib~]` object takes the absolute value of the parameters that enter through the right inlet.



2 Polyphony

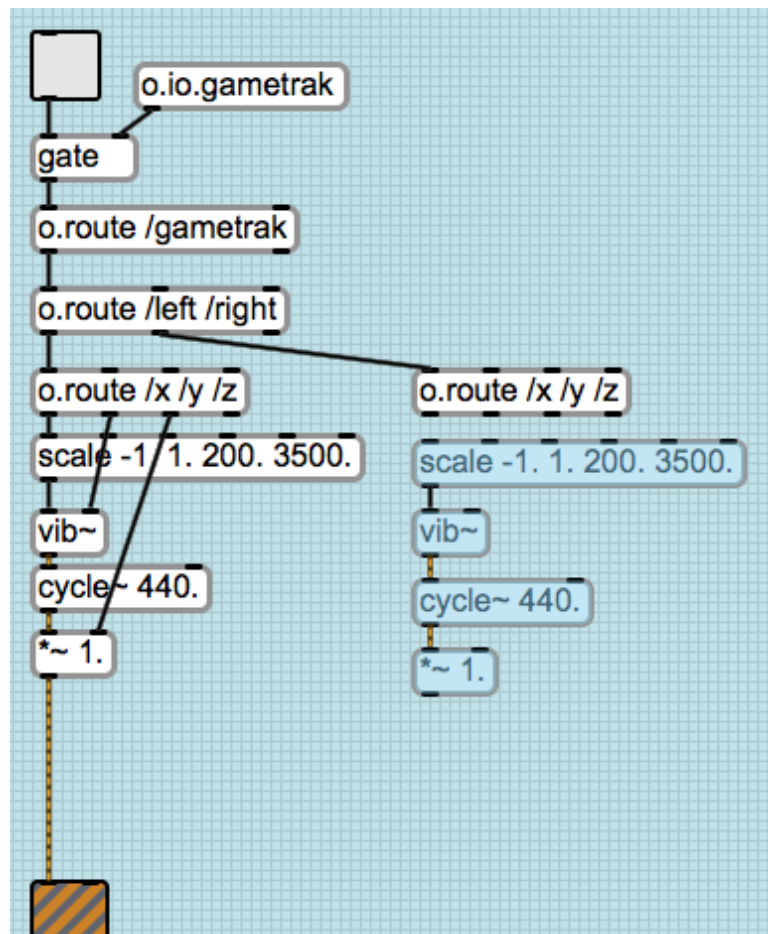
Now our Theremin has three parameters that we are controlling with the Gametrak, but we're not making very efficient use of our controller. In this section, we'll remap the three parameters of the Theremin to the left joystick and make a copy of the instrument that we can control with the right joystick.

1. Rewire your patch so that the /x, /y, and /z parameters of the left joystick control the frequency, gain, and vibrato as follows:

Gametrak parameter	Theremin parameter
/x	frequency
/y	vibrato
/z	gain

Since we had been controlling the frequency with the /z parameter which has a range of 0–1 and we will now be controlling the frequency with the /x parameter which has a range of -1–1, we will need to change the arguments of the [scale] object so that the first two are -1–1.

2. Now make a copy of all of the objects between the bottom [o.route /x /y /z] object and the [gain~] object.

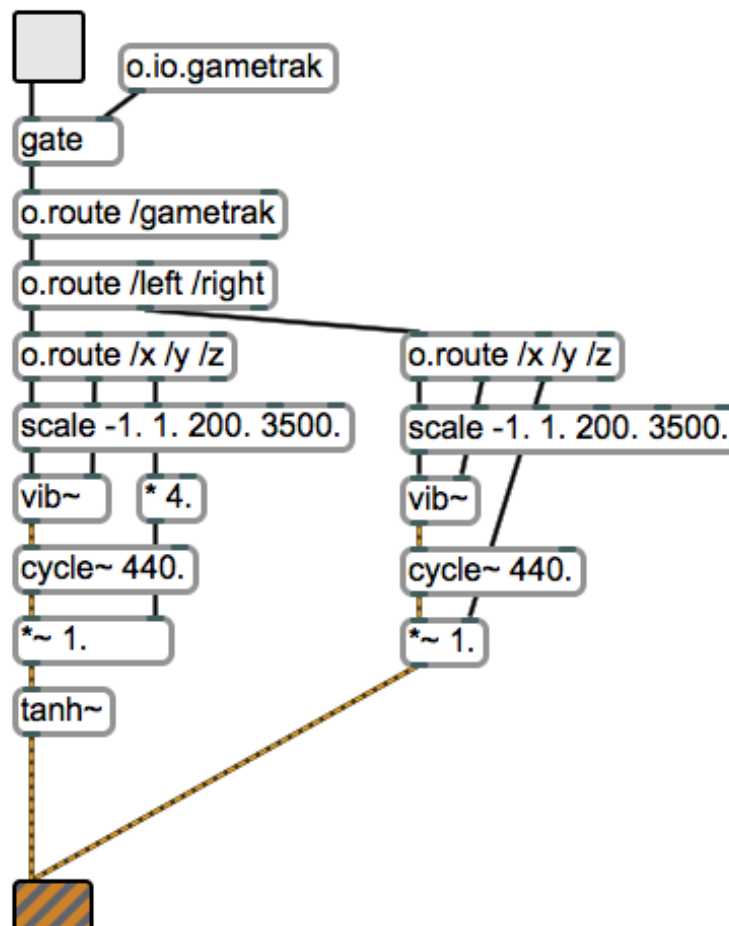


3. Wire up the copy so that the right joystick controls the three parameters of the second voice the same way that the left one does.

3 Brightness

We can improve our Theremin increasing the brightness of the tone as the volume increases. Increased brightness occurs when harmonics are added to our sine wave, which we can do by gradually transforming our nice round sine wave into a square wave. One way to do this is to increase its amplitude and send its output through a `[tanh~]` object. See the file called `brightness.maxpat` in the demos folder for a demonstration of how this works.

1. Start wiring a `[tanh~]` object between the `[*~]` (`[times~]`) object and the `[gain~]` object for the left voice.
2. Now we want the `/z` parameter from the Gametrak that is controlling the volume to have a greater range so that the signal saturates. Multiply the `/z` parameter by 4.



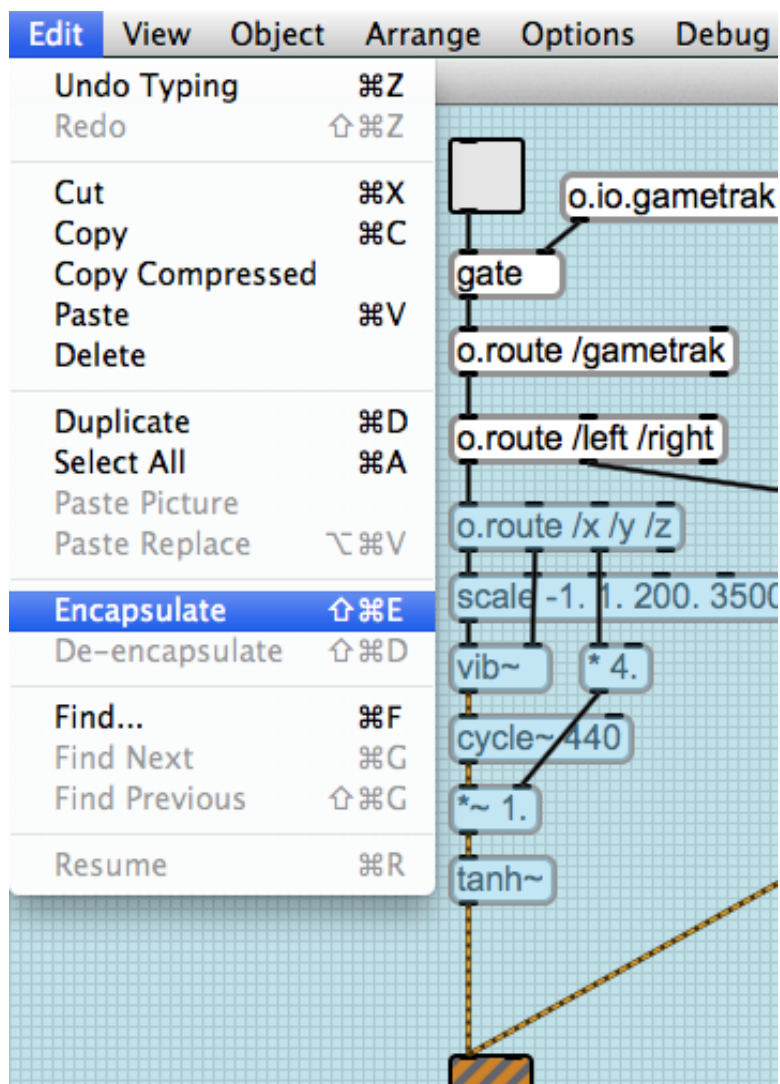
4 Abstraction

We would now like to apply the change that we've made to the left joystick (part 3 of today's lab) to the right joystick. There are at least two ways to implement this change for the second voice

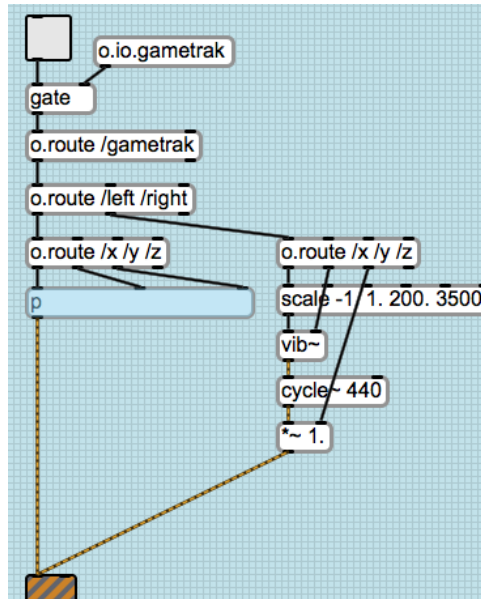
that we want to avoid: (1) we can simply repeat the necessary steps, or we can (2) delete the right side and copy the objects from the left and rewire them.

While neither of these scenarios may seem like a problem, try to imagine what it would be like if your patch contained 20 voices each with 20 objects. As we continue to copy and paste groups of objects that represent some sort of functionality, we quickly run into the need to *abstract* that functionality in a way that would allow us to make the change to one part of the patch and have that change propagate through all *instances* of that abstraction.

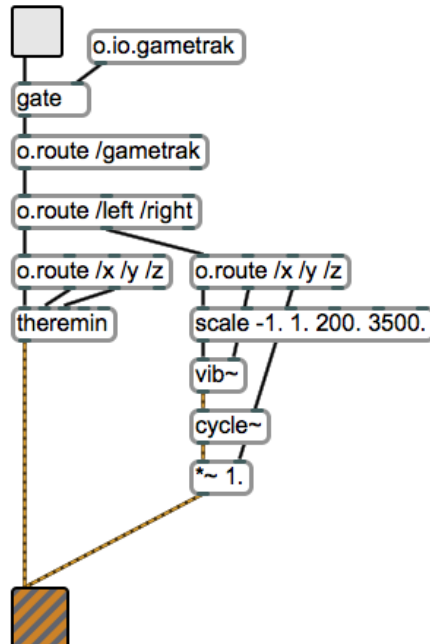
1. Select the objects in the left part of the patch that represent the Theremin voice (starting with [scale] and including [tanh~]).
2. Under the “Edit” menu, choose “Encapsulate.”



The objects that you had selected have now been encapsulated in an object called [p], which is short for [patcher]. We call this object a “subpatch” or a “subpatcher.”

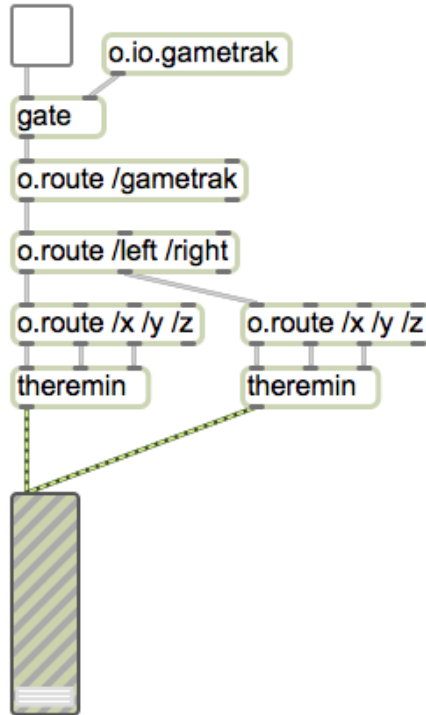


3. Double-click on the [p] object that was just created. You will see a window that contains all of the objects that you had selected still wired up in the same way.
4. Now save a copy of that new patch (by choosing “Save As...” from under the “Edit” menu). Save it in the directory for today’s lab—the same directory where the main Max patch you are editing is. You can call it anything you like (maybe Theremin.maxpat would be a good choice...).
5. Now close the subpatch window and, back in the main patch, replace the [p] object with the name of the patch you just saved, omitting the .maxpat extension. So, if you saved your patch with the title Theremin.maxpat, you should make an object called [Theremin].



There is no need to rewire your patch—since the subpatch and the abstraction you just made have the same number of inlets and outlets, Max will simply replace the subpatch with your [Theremin] abstraction, keeping the connections in tact.

6. Now, make a copy of the [Theremin] abstraction in the patch and replace the objects that constitute the second voice with the [Theremin].



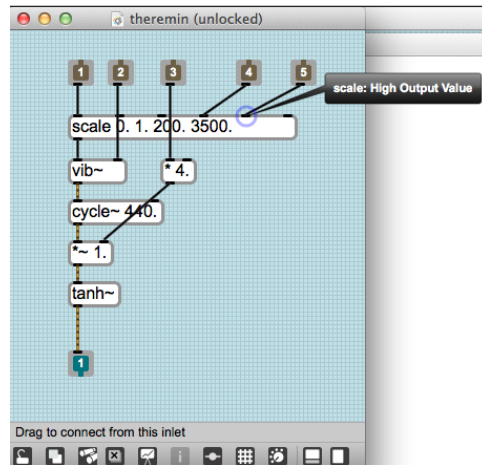
5 Parameters

The abstraction you made in part 4 allows you to make a change to the file you saved on disk (Theremin.maxpat) and to have that change take effect wherever it is used. Try it:

1. Open the file Theremin.maxpat on your hard drive and make a change to the parameters of the [scale] object and save the patch.
2. Now, go back to the main patch and double click on both instances of the [Theremin] abstraction—you should see the changes you made.

But what if we want to change the parameters of the [scale] object in the left instance of the [Theremin] to [scale -1. 1. 200. 1000.] and those of the right instance to [scale -1. 1. 750. 3500.] so that we have a low and a high instrument? For this, we need to expose these parameters so they can be accessed from the patch that contains the instances.

3. Open the Theremin.maxpat patch on the hard disk and add two inlets—you can do this by creating a new object and typing “inlet” into it, or by selecting, copying and pasting two of the inlets that already exist in the patch.
4. Now connect the left inlet you made to the fourth inlet of the [scale] object so that numbers coming in through that inlet control the output minimum value, and connect the right inlet you made to the fifth inlet of the [scale] object.



5. Save and close Theremin.maxpat. Notice that the two instances of the abstraction in the main patch have been updated with two new inlets.
6. Now we can control the minimum and maximum frequencies that the Gametrak's joysticks are mapped to. Connect number boxes to the new inlets of [Theremin] and set the frequencies to 200 and 1000 for the left and 750 and 3500 for the right.

