

STREET FIGHTER (AN IMPROVISATIONAL BALLET) is an ongoing collaboration between Yonatan Niv, Zachary Seldess (sound), & Andy Graydon (visuals). Using the Max/MSP programming environment, Zachary and Yoni have linked their own composed, sampled, and processed sound worlds with the 2D game environment of the 90's arcade game classic, Street Fighter.

In realizing the work, Zachary and Yoni use game controllers to simultaneously improvise music and play the game (i.e. fight each other). The game's fighting avatars are treated as musical instruments, the game's environment as improvisational space. Each character's fighting actions (punching, kicking, etc.) elicits a corresponding musical response; Sound is further processed and panned based on the character's more peaceful actions within the 2D space (crouching, jumping, flipping, walking, etc.). Adding a visual element to the improvisation, Andy runs the game's screenshot through a myriad set of processes, the result of which is fed back to the fighters. Mostly, Yoni and Zachary perceive the work in a chamber music context (non-violent?) -- they do, however, descend from time to time into the use of brute force. This is a necessary evil indeed, as the piece cannot end until someone dies.

At play in this work is the conflict/tension of various dichotomies (real or fabricated): music and sound effect, chamber piece and video game, ensemble and choreography. The aesthetic results of the work vary, depending... On the one hand we encounter two new instruments (possibly one massive instrument) that possess ingrained dramatic responses to their every musical gesture. (Imagine a marimba slithering two feet to the left every time middle C is struck). And on the other hand we may simply encounter the well-known characters of the game with newly ingrained musical responses to their every dramatic gesture.

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