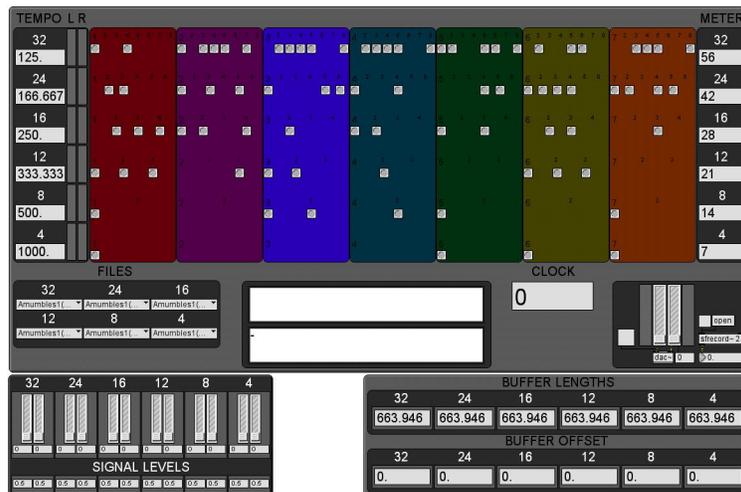


FRED, VICTORIA, BRUCE, AND AGNES – LIVE

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For laptop chamber ensemble (4 laptop performers, 1 laptop conductor)

Overview

This work uses as its sonic building blocks utterances from the 8-bit work “Fred and Victoria in Concert, Bruce and Agnes Too” by Swiss composer Istvan Zelenka. In the original piece, Istvan used a text-to-speech computer program to create a multi-movement gibberish sound-sculpture, each movement featuring one of the program’s “characters” (Fred, Victoria...). Using Max/MSP/Jitter, I have created four programs with which the performers musically and visually realize these characters in real-time. As with acoustic instruments, but to an exaggerated extent, these virtual instruments respond in a subtle and sometimes unpredictable fashion.

During performance, the conductor sends (via headphones) an array of prerecorded sound files to each performer. These sound files frame the performers’ musical relationships and responsibilities – giving them behavioral and technical parameters within which to improvise (sometimes specific, sometimes vague). The players, by entering certain commands, recall stored musical states and processes from the program and then, based on messages sent to them by the conductor, proceed to manipulate the program’s sonic and visual output in various ways. The content of these messages consists of the following:

- instructions on what part of the score to read,
- technical details regarding operation of the program (i.e. which aspect of the program to manipulate),
- and narratives about the characters themselves (their current social situations, physical/emotional states, etc.).

This last category of message is intended to help frame the performers’ musical relationships and activities. The conductor may, if so inclined, break out of her assigned instructional role (as conductor) and choose to send messages of a more personal nature (i.e. complements, insults, distractions, questions, commentary, etc.), intended not for the “performer” (as is usually the case in this scenario) but for the person BEHIND the performer.

Equipment

- 5 computers
- 1 CD-R containing software and other important files
- 1 audio interface/soundcard with 4 output channels (used by the conductor)
- 4 pairs of earbud headphones – 1 per performer (only left headphones used)
- 4 projectors (preferably with Digital inputs) and 4 projection screens – 1 per performer
- 8 audio monitors (used by the performers – 2 per computer)

Use of Software

Copy the contents of the CD-R to the desktops of all computers.

For Mac OSX:

/FVBA-LIVE(CD-R)/Applications/MacOSX/ → *open your character’s application file (ex. Agnes_withvideo)*

For Win XP:

/FVBA-LIVE(CD-R)/Applications/WinXP/<character’s name>/ → *open .exe file (ex. Agnes_withvideo.exe)*

In its complete form, the work is intended to have a visual component (ex. Agnes_withvideo file), but in the event that the necessary projection equipment is unavailable, I have also included an audio-only version (ex. Agnes_novideo file). These are the only files that you will use to perform the piece.

The video version of this piece requires **at least** 1 GB of RAM per computer (not including the conductor's computer, which plays only audio). For best results in video (best frame rate), use four desktop machines each with 2 GB of RAM and video cards that have 128 MB or more of dedicated RAM.

Monitor resolutions:

1st monitor (performers and conductor): 1280 x 854 or larger

2nd monitor/projector (performers only): 800 x 600

Positioning

Performers:

The four performers, in more traditional concert hall settings, may be stationed in a straight line facing the audience (ideally each sitting or standing at his own table). They should be positioned left to right, from the audience's point of view, as follows: Fred, Victoria, Bruce, Agnes. In more flexible settings, the performers may be dispersed at different points throughout the room, still facing the audience (ex. four corners). In this case, they should be positioned **clockwise** around the audience in the above-mentioned order. In both situations, the visuals are projected directly behind and above each performer (Fred's visuals behind the performer playing Fred, etc.). Connected to each performer's computer are two audio monitors, positioned on the left and right sides of the performer and facing the audience.

Conductor:

In the more traditional setup, the conductor sits at the center of the line, her back to the audience, facing the performers. In the dispersed setup, the conductor sits at any point in the room that is clearly visible to all performers. Connected to the conductor's computer is a multi-channel audio interface that has four headphones running out of its outputs as follows: Fred's headphones - channel 1, Victoria's headphones - channel 2, Bruce's headphones - channel 3, and Agnes' headphones - channel 4.

Instructions to Conductor and Performers

Refer to your scores throughout the performance.

Performers:

You control your instruments by typing various messages/commands into the text-command window. To bring focus to the text-command window press return/enter or simply click your mouse on it (the upper of the two windows, that is – the lower window shows your previously entered command).

Study the Key of Commands to learn how to play your instruments.

During the performance, the conductor will send you various audio messages, some of which will be information referring you to the score. When you hear, for example, "Number 1", look for the section in your score labeled **1**) and follow the directions, entering the given commands. If after the command message the score says "ENTER IMMEDIATELY", then type the given command and press return/enter. If the score says "ENTER AT CONDUCTOR'S CUE", then type the given command and look at the conductor for your cue to press return/enter. Some sections in your score will contain a box of text. Read these instructions after typing the required commands. They contain important information regarding your improvisational parameters.

Conductor:

Follow the instructions given in your score and computer program. When cueing the performers, use understated gestures not easily visible to the audience.

Performer Interface

The Performer Interface is a complex control panel with several sections:

- TEMPO L R:** A vertical column of controls on the left with tempo values: 32 (125), 24 (166.667), 16 (250), 12 (333.333), 8 (500), and 4 (1000).
- METER:** A vertical column of controls on the right with meter values: 32 (56), 24 (42), 16 (28), 12 (21), 8 (14), and 4 (7).
- FILES:** A section with dropdown menus for file selection, currently showing 'Amumbles1(...)' for various settings.
- CLOCK:** A central display showing the value '0'.
- BUFFER LENGTHS:** A row of six controls with values: 32 (663.946), 24 (663.946), 16 (663.946), 12 (663.946), 8 (663.946), and 4 (663.946).
- BUFFER OFFSET:** A row of six controls, all currently set to '0'.
- SIGNAL LEVELS:** A row of six vertical bar graphs, each with a '0' below it and a '0.5' below that.
- Other controls:** Includes 'open', 'srecord~ 2', and 'dac~ 0' buttons.

Conductor Interface

The Conductor Interface is a message routing and control panel with the following sections:

- Message Entry:** A row of buttons numbered 1 through 13, with a 'p messages' bar below them.
- Routing Grid:** A grid with columns 1-17 and rows for 'fred', 'victoria', 'bruce', and 'agnes'. A 'clear' button is to the left.
- Message List:** A list of 17 messages on the right side, such as '1 good job', '2 come on', '3 that was weird', etc.
- Message Entry (Bottom):** A row of buttons numbered 1 through 17, with a 'sel 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17' bar above them.
- Signal Controls:** Includes 'p custom messages', 'matrix~17 4', 'receive~ fred', 'receive~ victoria', 'receive~ bruce', 'receive~ agnes', 'r sig', '*~ 1.', and 'dac~ 1 2 3 4'.
- Additional Controls:** A 'Click this to turn on sound' button, a '0.' control for 'Change the signal level', and an 's sig' button.