INTRODUCTION

Power and Responsibility:
Politics, Identity and Technology in Music

"Who's in charge here, anyway?"

Was there ever a composer's garret—a lonely room far above the shrill of public pressures? Probably not. Composers have traditionally been dependent on an intimidating network of publishers, performers and patrons. Painters and poets might have the option (economically challenging though it might be) of working for an audience of one, but composers—like architects—have had to rely upon others to realize their work.

Until recently. To the chagrin of commercial recording studios and musicians' unions, the home studio is now an affordable option for the anti-social composer. One can go from keyboard noodling to sellable CD with nothing more than a personal computer and a pizza delivery service. Add a web site and a nearby post office and you are in business. Both the financial self-interest of the composer and the preferences of the public lie in recordings rather than live concerts, so if one is willing to accept a limited set of ersatz instruments and virtual acoustic spaces, several irksome middlemen would seem to be out of work.

But, as always, technological innovation comes bundled with contradictions. The answer to the hermit's prayer has, ironically, turned out to be a powerful social tool, and the digital one-man-band has been all but drowned out by the street noise of the information superhighway and the chit-chat of global communities. The sudden ubiquity of the Web, and the hula-hoop-like hype accompanying it, have brought a new immediacy to the social significance of personal technology. The desktop computer has metamorphosed into a telephone, a device whose "hardware features" are of far less interest than the behavior of the person on the other end.

People are thinking about people again; multifarious notions of "collaboration" are in the air, and on-line. Composers today are likely to parse out the responsibility for musical decisions among numerous external parties and conditions: pseudoautonomous hardware and software, improvising musicians, variables of architectural space, the interaction of an audience, etc. The current confluence of individual ambitions, technological resources and socio-economic constraints raises fundamental questions about the identity and responsibility of the composer.

For this issue of *Leonardo Music Journal,* we invited composers, sound artists and writers to reflect upon the role of the composer within modern sociological and technological networks: How do you define yourself and your community with respect to nation, gender, race, sexual identity, choice of tools, style of music? How does your identity affect the decision-making process? Where does responsibility lie in your music? How do you allocate power? How do you justify its use?

The technological thread that ties the issue together is of many colors. Several writers discuss the role of algorithms and models in music, ranging from emulations of Gustav Mahler (David Cope) and applications of geological catastrophe theory (Ann Warde), to improvising music machines (Greg Schiemer) and parallels between composition and Information Systems development (Sasan Rahmatian), to a critique of the practice of modeling in general (Dante Tanzi). Alternative and extended musical instruments appear, based on violins (Suguru Goto), chessboards (Lowell Cross), knitted resistors and roller skates (Justin Bennett). Networks abound: Sergi Jordà and William Duckworth describe elegant projects for the World Wide Web, while Mark Trayle employs automated teller technology, Chris Brown links local area networks with Afro-Cuban rhythms and Krystyna Bobrowski returns to the true origins of the Net with simple bits of string.

Some authors have focused on aesthetic or overtly political issues: William Osborne analyzes European orchestral isomorphism; David Dunne and René van Peer reflect on the responsibilities of musical interaction with the environment; Frederic Rzewski contributes a 1968 manifesto on political action in music, while Daniel Goode mixes Marxes in Tom Lehrer-like song; Rajmil Fischman recounts a cultural diaspora that took him from Peru to England via Israel; and Fred Ho reconciles ethnic identity, political consciousness and musical style. Taken together, these submissions reveal the deceptive effortlessness with which artists create (in the words of Fischman) "local universes [within the] global village."

The printed journal is twinned with a Web site (<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/lmj/articles.html>) that contains, in addition to articles received too late for inclusion in print, an

extensive autobiographical notebook by the late Jim Horton (1944–1998), a pioneer practitioner and theoretician of live computer music. Under the moderation of John Bischoff, the Horton text is intended as a catalyst for an ongoing archive of the history of the San Francisco Bay Area computer music scene—a sort of "electronic oral history." We encourage participants and observers to contribute, via the Web site, anecdotes, comments, elaborations and corrections.

This issue of *Leonardo Music Journal* is also accompanied for the first time by a multi-use CD. Rather than limit ourselves to a purely audio recording, we invited Belgian computer artist Guy van Belle to curate and design a disk that combines audio tracks with a multi-platform CD-ROM containing video clips, graphic files, hypertext documents, interactive software, sample programs and Web artifacts.

Who's in charge here? You choose.

NICOLAS COLLINS
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