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Interactive Sonic Sculpting and Machine Improvisation

Douglas Van Nort, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Experimental Music and Digital Media Faculty Candidate

Johnston Hall 338
April 24, 2013 - 01:30 pm

Abstract:

Interacting with computers in musical performance is now a well-established practice, with the machine's role ranging from accompaniment to instrument to partner. In many digital performance systems the focus is placed on sequencing musical materials or working from a fixed set of musical states. This can be limiting in the case of improvisation, where such systems require a high degree of flexibility in reacting to fellow musicians in a given musical context, with nuance and expression.

This talk will present my performance practice and related system design challenges that are focused on improvisation *with* machine as instrument as well as *by* machine, as partner. The work places a special emphasis on the interplay of human/machine listening and gestural understanding, centered around expressive sound shaping.

Speaker's Bio:

Doug Van Nort is an experimental musician and researcher whose work is dedicated to the creation of immersive and visceral sonic experiences, and to personal and collective creative expression through composition, free improvisation and generally electro-acoustic means of production. His instruments are custom-built systems that explore a sculptural approach to working with sound and improvisation in partnership with machine processes. His source materials include any and all sounds discovered through attentive listening to the world. Recordings of Van Nort's music can be found on Deep Listening, Pogus and Zeromoon among other experimental music labels, and his writing has recently appeared in Organised Sound, the Leonardo Music Journal, Kybernetes and the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America. He regularly performs and presents his work internationally, and is a member of several ensembles including Triple Point with Pauline Oliveros and Jonas Braasch, and the Composers Inside Electronics, founded by the late David Tudor.

Van Nort holds a Ph.D. in Music Technology from McGill University, an M.F.A. in Electronic Arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and an M.A. and B.A. in Pure Mathematics from the State University of New York (Potsdam) including studies in Electronic Composition at the Crane School of Music. He is currently a research associate and instructor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

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