

Pyrogenesis

Pascal Baltazar

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Biographical information

Pascal Baltazar is a composer and research coordinator at GMEA, National Center for Musical Creation in Albi, France. His research focuses on spatial and temporal perception of sound, and its relationship to the body and musical gesture. He is coordinating the *Virage* research platform, on control and scripting novel interfaces for artistic creation and entertainment industries, granted by the French Research Agency, in the frame of its Audiovisual and Multimedia program, for the 2008-2009 period. He is an active member of the Jamoma collective.

He has studied Aesthetics (Masters of Philosophy Thesis *The sonic image : material and sensation*, 2001, Toulouse III, France) and electroacoustic composition at the National Conservatoire of Toulouse. He has then been implied as a composer or interactive designer in diverse artistic projects : concerts, performing arts shows and interactive installations. He has been commissioned for musical works by several institutions, as the French State, INA-GRM, GMEA, IMEB... and participated in international festivals (Présences Électroniques, Paris / Radio France Festival, Montpellier / Synthèse, Bourges / Videomedeja, Novi Sad / Space + Place, Berlin...).

Description of Piece

The composition of Pyrogenesis took inspiration from several aspects of the blacksmithing, not in a literal way, but much as a set of correspondences :

First, the gesture, by which the blacksmith models the matter continuously; striking, heating, twisting, soaking metals to gradually print a form into them.

Then, the tool: Just like the blacksmith manufactures his own tools, I work on developing my own electro-acoustic instrument: an instrument to write sound, in space and with a gestural input.

Lastly, the organic construction of the form: Gilles Deleuze says "Why is the blacksmith a musician? It is not simply because the forging mill makes noise, it is because the music and the metallurgy are haunted by the same problem: that the metallurgy puts the matter in the state of continuous variation just as the music is haunted by putting the sound in a state of continuous variation and to found in the sound world a continuous development of the form and a continuous variation of the matter "

On a more technical/scientific point of view, the interaction with the performer uses two interfaces : a Wacom tablet, and a set of force-resistive-sensors (through an analog-to-digital converter), which common point is that they both allow control by the pressure of hands, and thus offer a very "physical" mode of control.

The composition/performance environment consists of a set of generative audio modules, fully addressable and presettable, including a mapping engine allowing a quick yet powerful set of mapping strategies from controllers inputs and volume envelopes to any parameter, including those of the mappers themselves, allowing a very precise, flexible, and evolutive sound/gesture relationship in time.

The composition has been realized through a constant dialogue between improvisations in a pre-determined trajectory, and afterwards-listening of the produced result. Thus, most of the details of the composition have been generated by an improvisation/learning-through-repetition process, without any visual support - thus allowing to emphasize expressivity while keeping a very direct relationship to the musical gesture.