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Using A Phone To Create Music With A Digeridoo

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Abstract

DJ phone apps are not commonly used by percussionists, particularly when performing with an Australian Indigenous Instrument such as a Digeridoo. Therefore, this reflection paper documents one example, titled Sonic Yarns. Sonic Yarns is an improvised duo performance piece performed by University of Newcastle staff members, Ray Kelly Jnr and Adam Manning.

Keywords

STEAM, Phone, Digeridoo, DJ App, Music Techniques

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Adam Manning & Ray Kelly Jnr

The improvised duo performance piece, Sonic Yarns uses the following instruments, a digeridoo, acoustic and digital percussion instruments and a DJ phone app, and an effects unit. Interestingly, Sonic Yarns was the first time the duo had performed together using a phone. Conversely, it's important to acknowledge Sonic Yarns was crated and performed soon after the Australian 2020 Black Lives Matter movement had gained traction. Therefore, Sonic Yarns purpose was to celebrate Indigenous culture within a modern performance context. However, this report documents Sonic Yarns live performance and composition approach with reference to using a DJ phone app.

Figure One: Ray Kelly Jnr and Adam Manning performing Sonic Yarns

Sonic Yarns uses a DJ phone app called: Maschine. Maschine is an industry standard DJ based sampling program. Using Maschine in Sonic Yarns meant a series of rhythmic loops were deployed during the performance via real-time finger gestures, which allowed both performers to improvise over. However, due to the size of the phone, it did make performing real-time finger gestures challenging. Additionally, the phone was place on the floor during the performance, which was not desirable from a performance gestural perspective. Yet, Maschines rhythmic loops did provide the listener with contemporary groove-based sonic patterns and helped create a sense of cohesion, through the use of repeated patterns.

Interestingly, Sonic Yarns composition/improvisation ideas were notated using a graphic form. As one will observe when looking at the below graphic notation there are four main sections. This form of graphic notation ultimately sets the piece length and dynamic charter. For example, the first and third sections, are dynamically quieter and are underpinned by free time and largely acoustic improvised interactions; and sections two and four were based on Maschines loops are the dynamically climatic points of the performance. Sections two and four climaxes are underpinned by Maschine dense loops and improvised percussion techniques, digital percussion effects manipulation and digeridoo techniques. Therefore, Maschines loops provides Sonic Yarns with a sense of structural cohesion, dynamic/textural tension, and improvisational freedom.
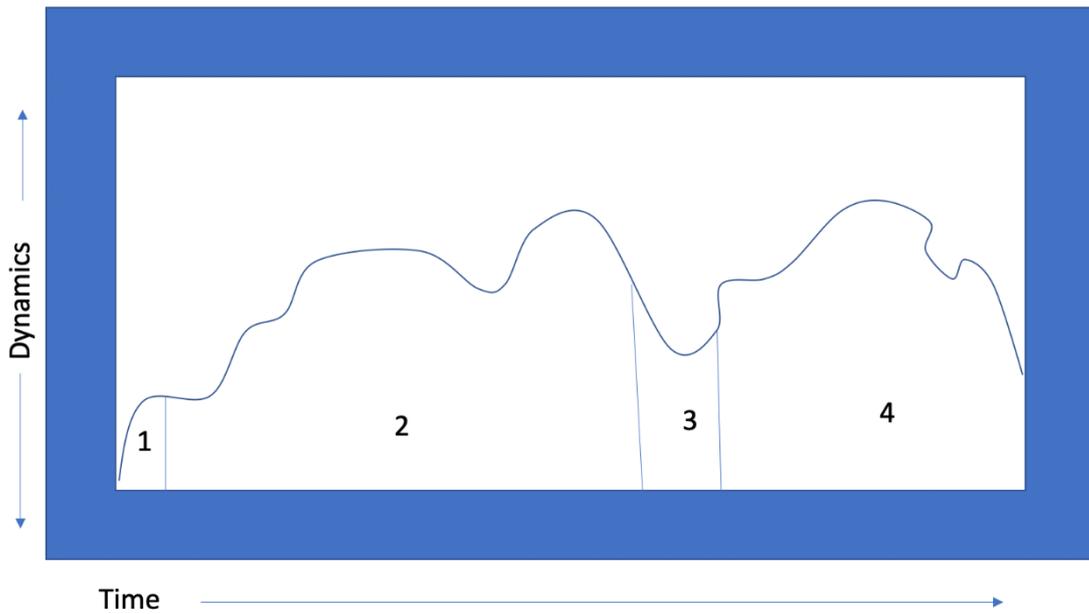
Figure Two: Sonic Yarns Graphic Notation

The next steps to improve this performance concept are to consider the phones stage/performance placement, and the DJ phone apps live sampling. Therefore, the above performance combination does require more research. Nevertheless, Sonic Yarns, musical approach and performance outcomes in ways demonstrates how musicians can connect Indigenous culture with technology via phone-based performance practices, which is particularly useful for musicians who are comfortable improvising.

Sonic Yarns live stream performance can be observed via the following link:

https://www.facebook.com/UONStudentCentral/videos/296257281774884/UzpfSTIzNzE5O DIwNjQwOTEyNjoyNzk2NDEyNTEwNDg3Njcw/?eid=ARBVJ74wjVdabaY-jE1tKsdHEyIFNKgza91WbojQiCP-0RfoWxOQHL9I8FCCTqDehjB_CbO1ideo_r46