

Aurélio Edler-Copes
Mental Radio Machine I & II
2019
Creation
2020



The setup and the execution of the electroacoustic part
of this work requires a Computer Music Designer (Max expert).

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Work related information

Performance details

- May 9, 2019, Luxembourg, Philharmonie

Publisher : BabelScores

Detailed staff

- bass flute, bass clarinet, electronic/MIDI keyboard/synthesizer, percussionist, electric guitar, viola, cello

Realisation

- Benjamin Lévy

Useful links on Brahms

- [Mental Radio Machine I & II](#) for amplified ensemble, effects pedals, sampler and live electronics (2019), 30mn
- [Aurélio Edler-Copes](#)

Version related information

First performance

Performance date: May 9, 2019

Documentation date: March 18, 2020

Version state: valid, validation date : May 2, 2020, update : May 6, 2021, 3:09 p.m.

Documentalist

Benjamin Levy (Benjamin.Levy@ircam.fr)

You noticed a mistake in this documentation or you were really happy to use it? Send us feedback!

Realisation

- Benjamin Lévy (Computer Music Designer)
- Sylvain Cadars (Sound engineer)
- Damien Ripoll (Assistant)

Version length: 30 mn

Default work length: 30 mn

No other version available

Electronic equipment list

Computer Music Equipment

- 2 MacBook Pro - *Apple Laptops* (Apple)
- 1 footswitch control - *MIDI Controllers* (MIDI Solution)
- 2 MIDI Keyboard - *MIDI Keyboard*
- 1 Footswitch / Sustain Pedal - *Footswitch / Sustain Pedal*
- 1 Volume Pedal - *Volume Pedal*
- 1 MIDI booster - *Booster*

Audio Equipment

- 1 MKE 2-2R Blue Dot - *Lavalier Microphones* (Sennheiser)
- 1 MKE 2-2R Red Dot - *Lavalier Microphones* (Sennheiser)
- 1 MC1 - *Contact Microphones* (FWF)
- 1 MV1 - *Contact Microphones* (FWF)
- 6 DI-box - *DI box*

Musical Instruments

- 3 Little Big Muff Pi - *Distortion Pedal* (Electro Harmonix)
- 3 Black Secret - *Distortion Pedal* (Mooer)
- 3 Whammy 5 - *harmonizer pedal* (Digitech)
- 3 Crybaby CB-535Q - *Whawha pedal* (Dunlop)
- 2 Sentry - *Noise Gate pedal* (T.C. electronic)
- 6 Pro RMP - *Re-amping pedal* (Radial Engineering)
- 2 EV 5 - *Expression pedal* (Roland)
- 2 OWL - *Programmable pedal* (Rebel Technology)

Files

File	Type	Author(s)	Comment
Detailed Tech Rider	Technical rider	S.Cadars, B.Lévy, A.Edler-Copes	
Patch & Sounds	Performance patch	A.Edler-Copes, B.Lévy	
OWL Patches & Code	Patch	B.Lévy, A.Edler-Copes	
Full Score	Score	A.Edler-Copes	

Instructions

Audio Setup

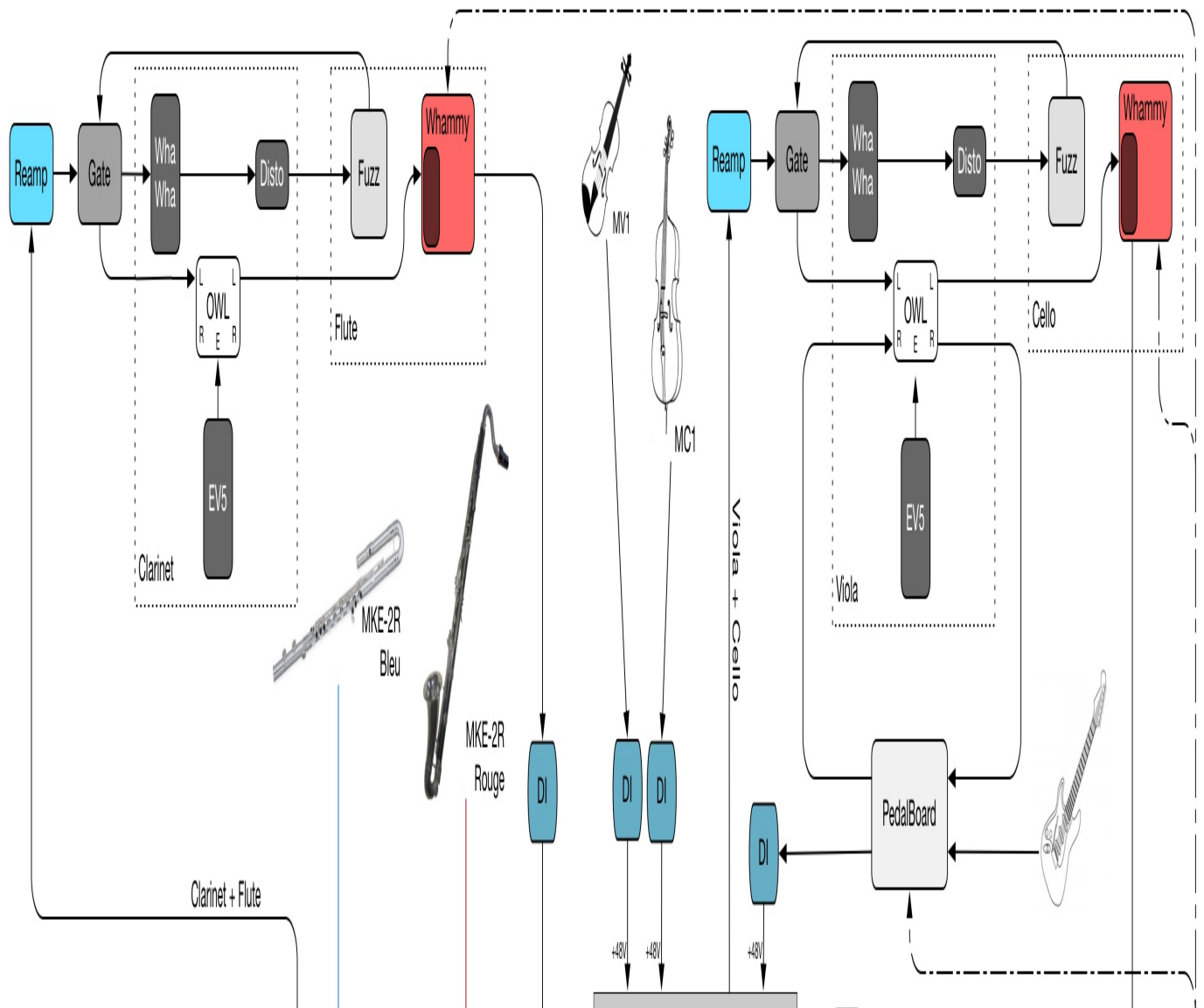
Pedals & Amp setup

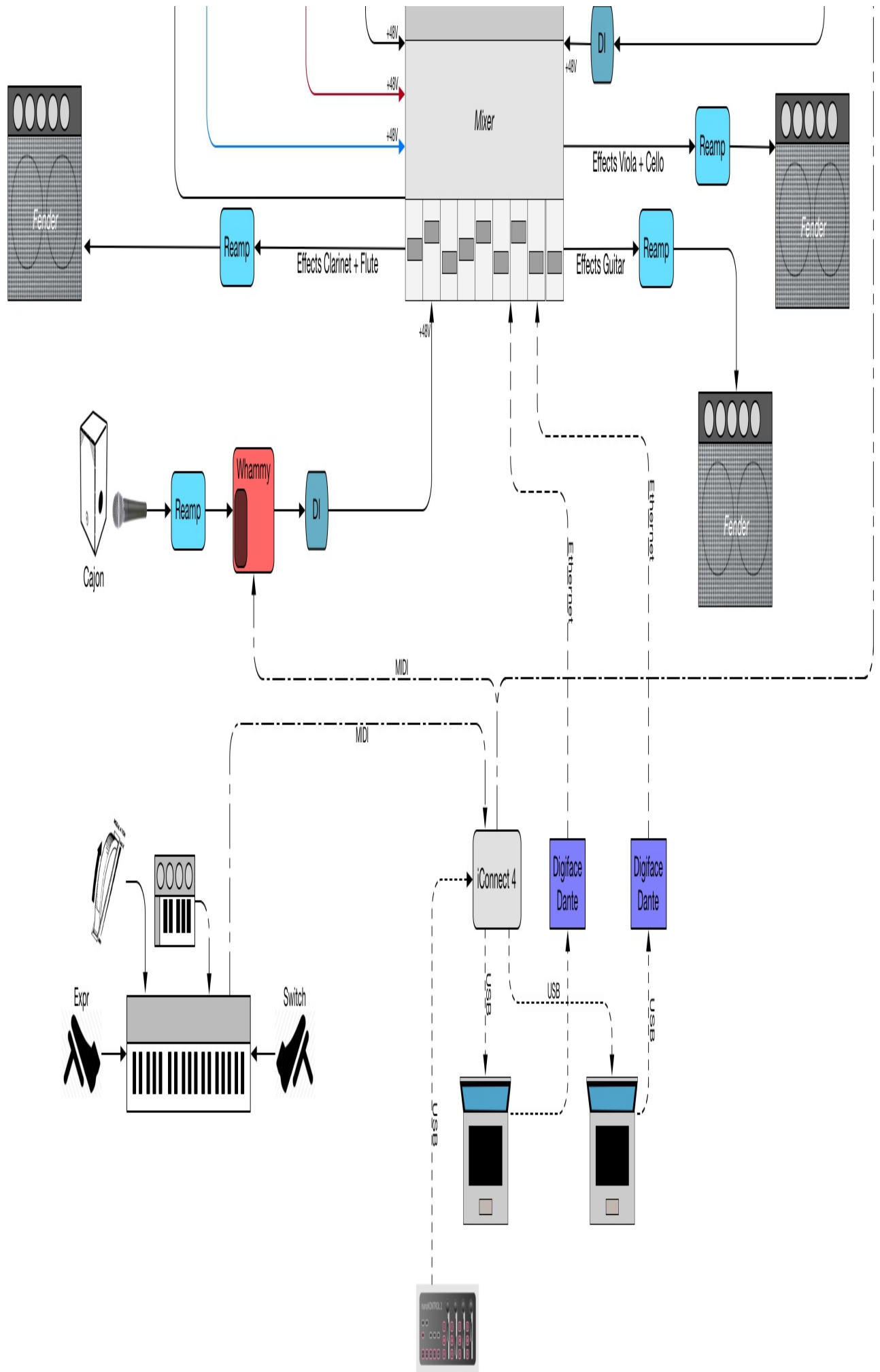
4 groups of instruments have a effect pedals and guitar (Fender) amplifiers:

- Viola and Cello have a common set of pedals, spread across both musicians and output in a guitar amplifier placed behind them.
- Flute and Clarinet have also a common set of pedals, spread across both musicians and output in a guitar amplifier placed behind them.
- Guitar has its own dedicated and custom pedalboard output in the amplifier in front of him and keyboards.
- Cajon/percussions has a Whammy pedal only and is output in a dedicated monitor behind the player.

Audio setup

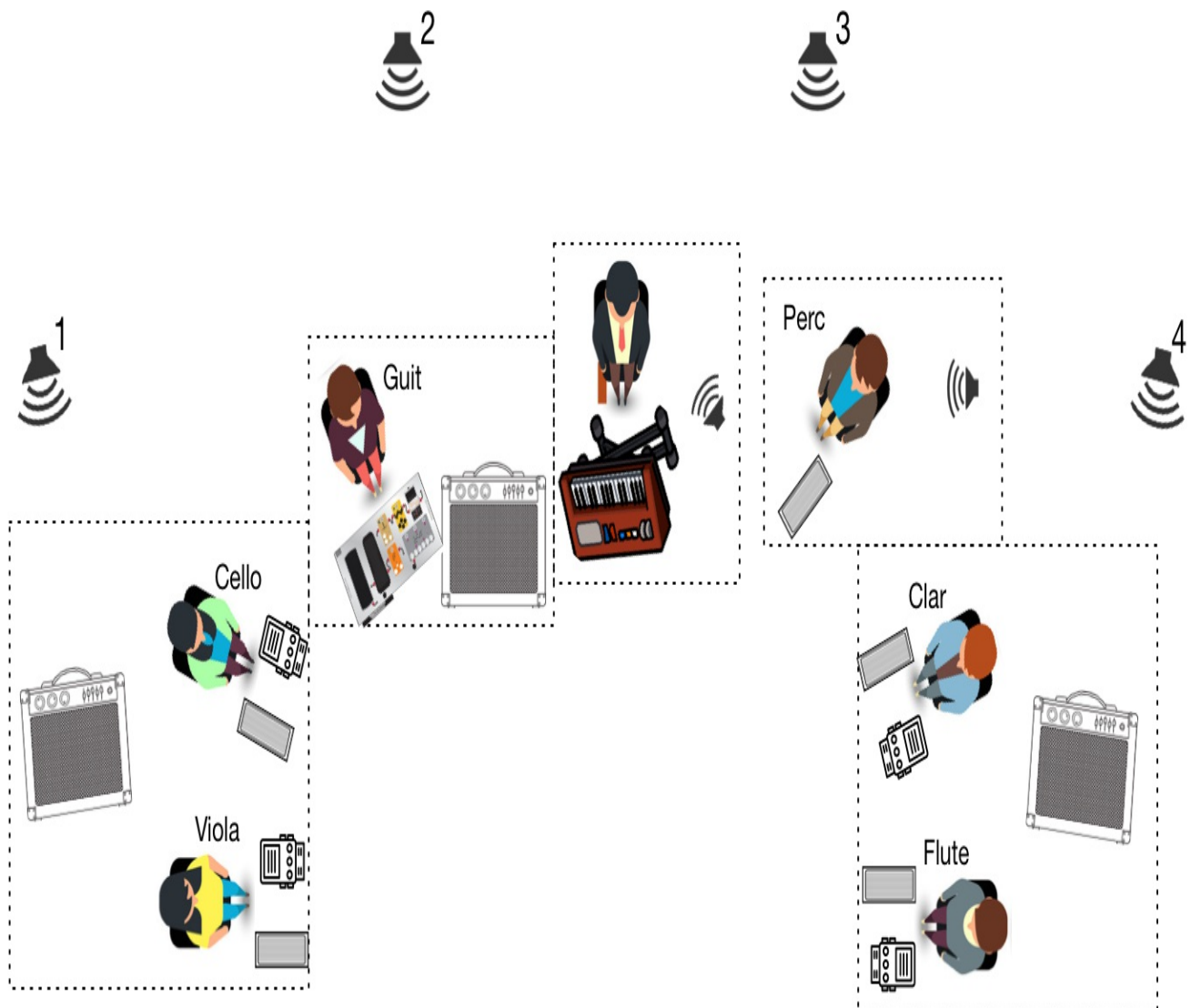
The audio routing and connexions are quite complicated in this piece as all the instruments have pickups going through the main mixer, then sent back to effect-pedals controlled by the musicians. Then the output of every pedal board is sent up to the mixer and back to the amplifiers on the stage. This means that a lot of DI-boxes and ReAmp-box are used to adapt levels and impedances to this circuit. The whole setup is best described by the diagram below:





Electronics & Loudspeaker setup

On the contrary, the electronic part setup is rather simple, the Max patch is sent to 4 channels, each of them being directly routed to 4 main speakers placed behind the music ensemble to form an arch in the background as show in the diagram below.



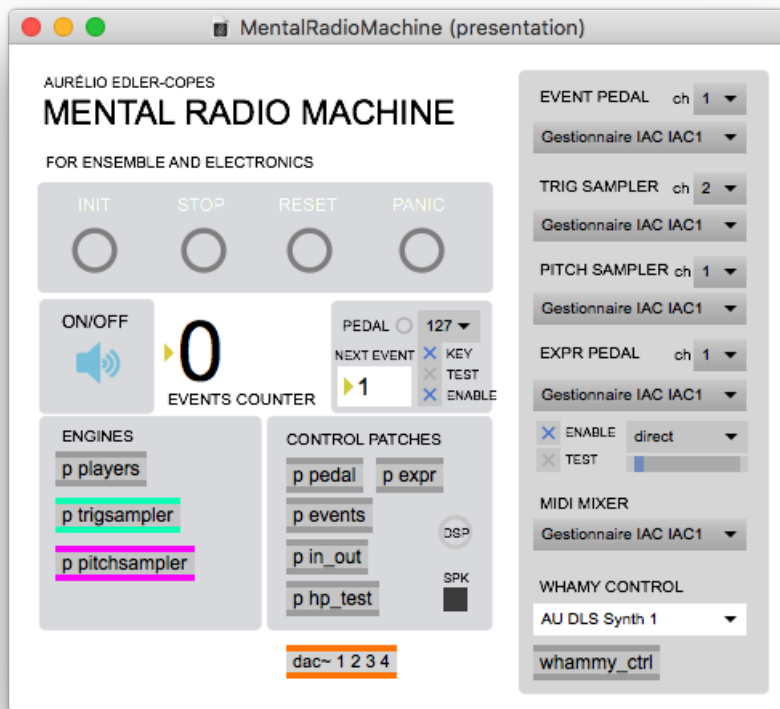
Performance Patch

Software installation

The electronic part is solely composed of the Max patch and Sounds banks downloadable below. No specific external is necessary. The patch runs in Max 8 and no specific instruction is needed concerning vector/buffer sizes. A good habit is to run it with “Overdrive” option ON (but that’s not mandatory).

Patch presentation

The main patch of the piece is captured below.



The electronics has 3 main engines:

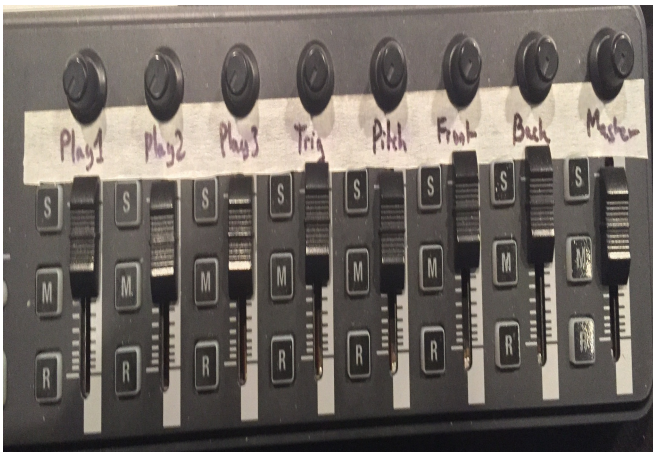
- a **triple file player** used to play whole files triggered by the events and sometimes *transpose* and *scratch* by the keyboard player
- a **trigger sampler** controlled and played note by note with one of the keyboards. This sampler assigns different files for different keys of the keyboard (starting from MIDI note 36). This sampler does not transpose files depending on the key pressed but depending on the expression pedal connected to the keyboard.
- a **pitch sampler** controlled and played note by note with the second keyboard. This sampler divides the keyboard in 2 sections (lower/upper half) and assigns one file to each section depending on the cue (event). For each section of the keyboard, the same file is played for every key pressed and transposed according to the MIDI pitch of the key.

Midi setup

There are several MIDI inputs and outputs in this piece. We used a sole *iConnect* interface to gather all of them and interface them with Max/MSP. The configuration of those is done in the right column of the main patch captured above.

Inputs

- A sustain/footswitch pedal connected to one of the keyboards and received as MIDI controller 64 is used to trigger the next event of the piece. You can turn it off or change the “polarity” of the pedal with the small menu on the line labeled `PEDAL` . The small `bang` next to it is only used for visualization of the incoming pedal hits.
- The large MIDI keyboard on stage is routed to the *pitch sampler*.
- The small MIDI keyboard on stage is routed to the *trigger sampler*. Those two keyboards can be played on the same MIDI input/connection if they are assigned to two different channels.
- An expression pedal connected to one of the keyboards and received as MIDI controller 11 is used to transpose either the *trigger sampler* or the *file players* depending on the cues.
- The modulation ring (*pitchmod*) of one of the keyboards is received as MIDI controller 1 directly in the *players* patch (object `ctlin 1`)
- Finally, you can chose a MIDI controller as a *nanoKontrol2* or a *BCF2000* connected to the computer and acting as `MIDI MIXER` . Below is a picture of the nanoKontrol routing used for this performance of the piece.



Outputs

The Max patch of this piece is used to send control signals to the 4 *Whammy* pedals on stage, changing their mode depending on the cues (event) of the piece. These info are sent as MIDI Program Change messages dispatched to each of the *Whammies* depending on the MIDI channel (1 to 4). In the menu at the bottom of the right column of the patch, you need to choose the correct MIDI device connected to your computer and going on stage to be split and connected to the 4 pedals.

Manual controls

Init / Stop / Reset / Panic

The bangs on the top of the patch are used to initialize, stop the playing of files, reset the state of the patch (in particular when rehearsing) and stop everything in case of emergency

key shortcuts

- `esc` key is mapped to reset the patch (same à `reset` button).
- `left` and `right` arrows are mapped to go forward or backward for the `next event` .
- if the `KEY` checkbox is ticked next the `NEXT EVENT` label in the main patch, then you can use the `spacebar` to effectively trigger the next event.

Starting

There are not actions needed after loading the patch to start playing the piece. The `init` button is *loadbanged* automatically and turns also the DSP of Max ON. However, be sure that your MIDI inputs and outputs are correct!

OWL Pedal

This piece uses a programmable *OWL pedal* from the firm **Rebel Technologies**. We designed for this piece a specific *digital distortion* effect based on *sampling rate reduction* and *sample depth reduction (bit crushing)*. The design of those engines have be made in Max/MSP with the use of `gen~` object which allows to compile and embed the resulting effect into the OWL pedal.

gen~ patches

In the archive named `OWL Patches & Code` above, you will find all the element to examine, modify and compile (if needed) the *digital distortion* (named `digisto`). These are Max and `gen~` patches as well as the corresponding exported C++ code and a `sysex` export of the effect as we used it.

Note: the OWL parameters are to be used in `gen~` with parameter names: `A` , `B` , `C` , `D` , `Exp` , and `Push` .

sysex file

You can upload the `syx` file (*MIDI sysex* export) directly to the OWL without needing to recompile anything. For that operation, you need download and use the application *OwlControl* found on this website: <https://github.com/pingdynasty/OwlControl>

Load the `syx` file with the `Tools/Load file from patch` menu of the application. Choose either to run or to store the patch in one of the 4 custom slot of the pedal. Then upload to the pedal with the `Save to OWL` button of the interface. You should be able to test the *digital distortion* directly on the pedal, without connecting it to a computer.

Knobs & buttons

- As any guitar pedal, the main metal switch is use to engage or bypass the effect.
- The top left knob is a `Drive` control. It thus controls the intensity of the effect from no effect at all to *full distortion*.
- Second to left knob is a `Mix` control balancing from left to right between the *decimation* (sample rate reduction) and the *bit crusher* (sample depth reduction) effect. In the middle, both effects are active and mixed together.
- The third knob is a `Tone` control which changes the center frequency of bandpass filter integrated at the end of the effect chain.
- The most right knob is a `level` control which allows you to set the output *volume* of the pedal

Toolchain & Compilation

If you wish to compile yourself the Max/gen~ patch to modify it and upload it to the OWL pedal, you will need to gather those 3 tools:

- the OWL program containing the whole architecture of folders and scripts aso. to compile for the pedal
- gcc arm compiler (to make patch binary) to be placed in the `Tools` folder of the OwlProgram [1]
- FirmwareSender (to make sysex and run) to be placed in the `Tools` folder of the OwlProgram as well [2]

Building a Max gen~ patch, upload and run on the OWL pedal

To build and compile a Max/gen~ you need to export the code from the patch with the `export code` message. This creates a `.cpp` and a `.h` files as well as a `gen_dsp` folder in a `code` folder alongside your patch.

Then, you should be able to compile and run a patch called `digisto` with those steps:

- copy `digisto.cpp`, `digisto.h` and `gen_dsp` folder into `PatchSource` of the OwlProgram
- in the terminal `cd` to your toolchain/OwlProgram directory
- then execute `make GEN=digisto run` to compile and upload patch to attached OWL

Sysex export of a Max gen~ patch

Requires the `.cpp` and `.h` files of a gen~ patch generated by Max.

Then to compile and create a `sysex` file of a gen~ patch called `digisto` :

- copy `digisto.cpp`, `digisto.h` and `gen_dsp` folder into `PatchSource`
- in the terminal `cd` to your toolchain/OwlProgram directory
- then execute `make GEN=digisto sysex` to compile and package binary as sysex

References

[1] <https://developer.arm.com/open-source/gnu-toolchain/gnu-rm>

[2] <https://github.com/pingdynasty/FirmwareSender>

Program note

Dans *Mental Radio Machine*, Aurélio Edler-Copes thématise les paradoxes de la révolution numérique. Il entame une réflexion sur l'utilisation croissante de systèmes technologiques dans notre société ainsi que sur le rapport entre l'homme et la machine. Son univers se situe au point de bascule entre l'émerveillement envers les nouvelles technologies et l'effroi face à *leurs dérives*.

L'effectif réunit des instruments acoustiques (flûte basse, clarinette basse, alto, violoncelle et percussion), une guitare électrique et des samplers. Tous les instruments sont connectés à des amplificateurs à lampe et traités avec des pédales d'effet analogiques ainsi qu'avec une nouvelle génération de pédales *open source*. Ces dernières permettent de concevoir et d'intégrer des patches Max dans la chaîne de pédales des musiciens sur scène, sans passer par l'ordinateur. Une vraie fusion entre l'analogique et le numérique ! Par ailleurs, un multi-échantillonneur, conçu spécifiquement pour la pièce, permet de déclencher et de manipuler en temps réel une voix de synthèse *lo-fi*. Cette voix, spatialisée en quatre canaux sur scène, est en constant dialogue avec l'ensemble, créant ainsi une étrange symbiose entre voix synthétique et geste instrumental. Un corps sonore hybride, vocal et instrumental, analogique et numérique, électroacoustique et synthétique.

À la source de cette œuvre électrique se trouvent le flux textuel des derniers romans de Thomas Bernhard — leurs discours incessants, frénétiques et répétitifs, tel une voix *off* dans la tête du lecteur — ainsi que des symboles de la culture pop des années 1980 (ordinateurs personnels, jeux vidéo, robots, vocodeurs, radiocassettes) et certaines des technologies actuelles (reconnaissance facial, vidéo surveillance, intelligence artificielle).

Aurelio Edler-Copes, note de programme du concert du 10 septembre 2020 au T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers.

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