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Percussion Literature

Time & Money

“Time & Money” (2004) is a piece written by Pierre Jodlowski for the instrumentation of percussion, video and electronics. A three-part work that opens with a video sequence interlude into a percussion performance on a simple black cube table in part one. The piece then moves the percussionist to a drum-set set-up performing faster rhythmic gestures in part two and three. The entire performance is juxtaposed with real-time motion sensing, electronic sounds, and video to symbolize the contrast between rudimentary objects, technologies, and the ever increasing pace expressing the metaphor of the human relationship with time and money. Pierre Jodlowski's works focuses largely on the aesthetics of performance gestures and its relation to sound. “Time & Money” is a monumental piece in which he explores this dynamic.

Pierre Jodlowski spoke on the beginning processes of composing “Time & Money”. The piece began as a close collaboration with percussionist Jean Geoffroy. They began by improvisatory rhythms and gestures. There is a certain relationship with energy and genuine movement during improvisation that Jodlowski wanted to capture. He dissected the behavior of these movement and rhythms and instinctively analyzed them to generate material for “Time and Money”. Pierre Jodlowski describes, in depth, his interest in using the collective conscious and memory of the audience to create a piece. He utilizes sounds that the audience has a pre-association with in our personal realities. This technique can form an indescribable immediate layer of familiarity, connection, and understanding of the piece. In part one of “Time & Money” he focuses on the simplicity of familiar gestures. The percussionist performs on a black cube, an object that we interpreted visually as a table, but still, aesthetically a basic geometric shape to remove us from immediate reality into a somewhat foreign visual realm of the piece. The table interpretation gives us a display of a completely commonplace situation, a

phenomenon any human can find relation to, the slight gestures performed mocks the actions of the unconscious tapping on tables in social environments that are performed on a daily basis by the individual; it is a real, everyday sound which one encounters in normal life. These actions are then exaggerated and developed by playing with the reaction and cause of gestures. Pierre Jodlowski accomplishes this by placing real-time motion sensing technology that records movements and in reaction to or from certain movements triggering electronic sounds; setting off a sonar phenomena. He manipulates familiar sounds in the electronics such as those of coins and the ambience of a casino. These sounds along with the gestures, lighting, and video create a metaphysical sonic space associated with the concept of money.

The electronics sounds used all create imageries and associations to the theme time and money. In part one of the work, sounds of coins dropping, coins echoing, coins spinning on a table top, and the ambience of a casino where multiple voices, faint music, and more coin sounds exist, are used. These have natural implications of their sonic environment. The movements of part one find familiarity to those of a gambler. The nervous tappings, placing of bets, swiping of the table (i.e: placing cards out or collecting bets), are reminiscent of the theme. Jodlowski then take these two factors and forces an engagement and relationship between the two on to the audience. In part two and three, Jodlowski uses the rhythm and sound of a clock ticking. This sound is dispersed through the final two parts and each time it is introduced it is interrupted by the percussionist's growing complex rhythmic phrasings. Eventually the electronic sound of the ticking clock begins to combine with samples of the percussive rhythmic phrases, and the return of the sounds of coins are manipulated to create another layer of complexity, and momentum. It is as if the concept of time becomes more erratic, and less predictable and chaotic with the addition of money.

The relationship between sound and gesture in "Time and Money" are manipulated throughout the piece. In certain occasions the sound comes first and a gesture follows in reaction, and other times the sound comes after as a cause to the gesture. For example in part one a sound is heard of a coin

dropping rings until the percussionist makes a gesture such as though he is grabbing the coin in the air, and as he clamps his hand into a fist as though the coin is grabbed, the coin sound ceases. This reaction is contrasted with the percussionist striking the air and an electronic impact sound follows. These two type of relations between sound and gesture alternate to create the obvious direct involvement of sound, space, and the performer. The piece then continues this alternation of gesture and sound reactions and build in frequency to create momentum; the theme of the piece, ever-evolving pace of space and time.

The piece calls for extreme hyper-control of rhythm and gesture as it is set to video and electronics. The notational process is crucial to the performance of the piece. Jodlowski continues the tradition of hyper-controlled notation and performance instruction of contemporary percussion literature in his score of “Time and Money”. Notations of how to perform gestures and where to hit on the cube in part one are notated clearly (see example I).

Example I

The diagram shows a cube with six lines of notation, each with a corresponding description:

- line 1 : with the angles of hands, at center of cube (hard sound)
- line 2 : with the end of fingers, at center of cube (soft sound)
- line 3 : with the plate part of fingers, at the side of the cube (high percussive sound)
- line 4 : right hand with first fingers, side of the cube (medium soft sound)
- line 5 : left hand with two fingers, side of the cube (medium high sound)
- line 6 : left hand, with middle finger, angle of the cube (slap sound)

The legend includes the following gestures:

- hit the cube with all the hand open
- virtual percussion left hand : just like to play an invisible perc at left side
- same with right hand
- right hand stop gesture (closing the hand at the end of a circular movement)
- (D) accent main droite
- (G) accent main gauche
- virtual percussion with left hand, like to play an object facing the public
- same with right hand

Gestures are clearly notated as well as electronics and how they function to the gestures (see example II). In example II(a), the score illustrates a gesture that is performed during the duration of the electronics. In example II(b), it illustrates the gesture as a reaction to the sequence of sound. In example II(c) we see gestures with electronic impacts that follow.

Example II

a.

Example II(a) shows a musical score with a circled measure number 07. The notation includes a staff with a circled '3' and a '4' below it, and a circled '3'' below that. The text 'trottements pièces' and 'main, frottements' is present. The dynamic marking *f_{sub.}* and *fp* are also shown.

b.

Example II(b) shows a musical score with a circled measure number 21. The notation includes a staff with a circled '3' and a '4' below it, and a circled '3'' below that. A hand gesture is shown above the staff.

c.

Example II(c) shows a musical score with circled measure numbers 37 and 38. The notation includes a staff with circled '3' and '6' below it, and circled '3'' and '6'' below that. Hand gestures are shown above the staff, with '(DG)' written below them.

The video element that plays at certain points throughout the piece is also clearly marked by clear cue points and exact tempo markings within the score (see example III).

Example III

The image shows a musical score for a video cue. At the top, a box labeled 'FILM 2.' is positioned above a horizontal line. Below this, a circled number '41' indicates the start of the cue. The score includes a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60$ and a duration of '12"'. The music is written in 4/4 time. Below the staff, there are markings for '61', '10', and '4'. A dynamic marking of *fff* is present at the bottom left. The text 'RÊSTER FIGÉ' and '(D)' are also visible.

In part two and three where electronics become more of a independent entity, the electronics are scored clearly with aural cue points for the percussionist to be precise in their performance (see example IV).

Example IV

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff contains the lyrics "yè | eh | eh | eh | ah | ah | ah | ah" with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff shows a rhythmic pattern with groupings of 3, 6, and 6 notes, and dynamic markings of *mf*, *mp*, and *mf*. To the right, another staff shows a tempo marking of $\frac{2}{4}$ and a dynamic marking of *f* with the note '(clics)'. Below this, another staff shows a rhythmic pattern with groupings of 6 notes and a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Theatrical statements are invaluable to Pierre Jodlowski's work "Time & Money". Lighting, staging, and the sonic realm are vital functions of the performance. The percussionist of "Time & Money" is no longer, simply, an instrumentalist, but the individual becomes a theatrical element. Electronics and visuals are independent entities but when a performer becomes involved, the relationship between the performer, electronics, and visual become forefront for the audience. The addition of a human entity performer, creates a focal point. As the audience, the natural tendency is to analyze and connect this relationship. What Pierre Jodlowski does in "Time and Money" is emphasis this through the use of visual stimuli of video that correlates with imageries of money, aural stimuli and a performer's movement. A piece that includes multi-media does not make it inherently theatrical, what creates a theatrical percussion piece, such as, "Time & Money", is the direct relationship that must be created between electronics and gesture, as well as an story-like concept. Jodlowski's piece, cycles

around the concept of Time and Money with his use of a patchwork of electronic sounds and visuals that stimulate a feeling and staging of a dimension that symbolizes this topic. What is key to this work that makes it so theatrical, is interaction and engagement between the performer and multi-media, as well as the visual aesthetic and reaction of the audience. In Pierre Jodlowski's publication "Le Geste: A Matter of Composition", he writes: "musical gesture doesn't result from notation, it's all the reverse : musical gesture comes before notation." Jodlowski believes that within a simple gesture holds many implications of energy, space, and sound, and as a composer the challenge is how to place them in a formal musical structure and its trajectory within a piece to create the most impact and dramatic theatrical effects.

Pierre Jodlowski's piece, "Time & Money" is an example of theatrical percussion literature. This concept has become increasingly popular in the current contemporary. Percussionists are seen as individualistic interactive performers, and multi-media platforms are becoming less of a technique for timbral effect, but as a level of engagement and interaction. Pierre Jodlowski uses gestures, electronics, and video to create a politically charged piece. The completely involved aspects of our human movements, familiarity of visual and aural associations, and the increasing rhythmic momentum forces the audience to face our conceptions about time and money.

Work Cited

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