

Praescio VII (piano... and then some)

Piano &
Interactive System

Bruce Pennycook

Commissioned by ACREQ with the assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts

For alcides lanza

Duration: ca. 15 minutes

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Program Notes

This work continues my interest in virtuoso solo pieces combined with computer-controlled electroacoustic forces. Previous works in the PRAESCIO series such as PRAESCIO-III: *the desert speaks* (MIDI harpsichord), PRAESCIO-IV (extended clarinet), and PRAESCIO-VI (flute) have exhibited a growing understanding by the composer of the compositional and technical demands imposed by the marriage of the virtuoso soloist and interactive systems.

In this work, I have attempted to weave computer generated musical materials and audio signals deeply into the design, construction and realization of all compositional aspects. Some of the underlying structures and certain passages for the piano soloist have been derived from algorithmic treatments using software developed in H. Taube's *Common Music* package for Macintosh Common Lisp. All of the audio materials (CD's) have been generated using software developed in the NeXT version of P. Lansky's *cmix*, a collection of programmable audio signal processing and manipulation routines. The result is a mixture of solo performer, performer-controlled interaction, MIDI controlled sample playback, plus multi-channel audio signals delivered under software control during the performance. It has been my intention that these many forces -- from algorithmically generated structures to real-time execution -- be seamlessly integrated into an expressive, dynamic vehicle for the soloist and that the piano and accompanying electroacoustic materials form a unified though greatly extended sonic resource.

Acknowledgments

This work was commissioned by ACREQ with the assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts. Technical assistance has been provided by Jason Vantomme (LISP resources) and Debbie Reynolds (piano recordings). Final piano score edited by alicides lanza. Notation by Dave Nichol and Bruce Pennycook.

It is dedicated to my friend -- composer/pianist, alcides lanza.

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Technical Requirements (original version)

piano, 2 microphones
Macintosh computer (68040 or faster, 8 Mbytes
RAM)
2 Opcode MIDI Translators (or an equivalent
dual port interface)
MIDI Time Clip¹
1 MIDI Foot Switch
2 Apple CD-ROM drives
E-mu Systems Proformance
E-mu Systems Morpheus

E-mu Systems Proteus-II
Niche ACM 8X8 MIDI-controlled mixer
Lexicon LXP-15 signal processor
digital reverberator
8 loudspeakers on stands
4 stereo amplifiers

¹ MIDI Time Clip

The *MIDI Time Clip* is a MIDI controlled device developed by B. Pennycook and Eric Johnstone which provides bi-directional communication between the computer system and the performer. A six-character display presents cues or other alphanumeric information, several colored LED's provide tempo or pulse cues. Two Foot Switches and one Continuous Controller may be connected to the device for triggers and control from the performer to the system.

Materials

Piano Part
software, data sets, setup information
2 Compact Disks (audio signals)

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Artistic Concept

This work originated from a commission by pianist and composer, Alcides Lanza. My intention was to extend the piano sonically and spatially using a variety of electroacoustic resources but retain the acoustic piano and the performer as the central element.

The soloist dominates the work in several ways. First, the solo part is intentionally virtuosic and “showy” providing a strongly pianistic vehicle for the soloist to demonstrate his artistry as a pianist. Second, the piano remains an acoustic instrument. Though amplified, it is not treated in any special way nor would a “midi controller-piano samples” instrument be a suitable alternative to a large, sonorous concert grand especially given the interior sounds sections of the work. Third, the pianist controls the flow and pace of the work by triggering events. In some cases an event is many measures (such as the opening), in others it may be single note or cd audio track.

The piece is essentially a double rondo. The two main elements: repeated notes (as heard in the opening) and descending chromatic chords (as heard in the section after the opening) form the basis for a series of episodes. Each episode presents another “view” of the material through development/variation techniques and through different contributions from the electroacoustic materials. As the episodes evolve, different electroacoustic materials are engaged.

Another aspect of the work is the sonic presentation. On stage, I have arranged eight loudspeakers (in four stereo pairs) in an array clustered around the piano. The intention is to provide a larger radiating source than two speakers. As shown in the setup page in the piano part (submitted), the speakers are all near the piano, rather than many meters away in the stage corners as usual. The piano, which itself is a very large sound radiator, is amplified only enough to enlarge the region of radiation and to provide a general balance with the electroacoustics.

The work is interactive from the viewpoint of control and flow of the materials. This is controlled by a footswitch (trigger data to computer) and the MIDI Time Clip interface which provides visual information and cues to the player in several formats: event number, tempo count-in, current measure count (where applicable), elapsed time in seconds (for passages with digital audio).

Technologies

The work was developed on Macintosh computers using: Common Lisp, MAX, Performer, and C (to make custom MAX objects) and on NeXT Computers: digital audio processing and mixing. CD-ROM's were recorded to store all digital audio passages (Pinnacle 2000 CD-R unit.)

Composition Software

Common Music - algorithmic passages for the MIDI system and for the piano
MAX - procedural generation of passages for MIDI system, post-processing
of Standard MIDI Files (generated in Common Music).

Digital Audio Processing

Digital recording and editing of piano fragments
Csound processing of piano fragments
CMIX processing of piano fragments
RT - processing and mixing of audio fragments

Performance Control

MAX software to control MIDI Time Clip input and output
MAX software to manage timing data from 2 CD-ROM's
MAX software to control NICHE Audio Control Unit (automatic
audio levels, 8 in --> 8 out)
MAX software to manage, play and post-process Standard MIDI Files

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Montreal, 1994

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Technical Requirements (Version 2)

A second version of Praescio VII was prepared for touring. It requires only a CD player and the Praescio VII Version 2 Compact Disk.

The CD is available from the composer.

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♩ = 100

8va sempre

♩ = 120

accel. poco a poco

riten.

Piano

Midi

Pno

Midi

e.1

18X

5 (8va)

dim.

ppff

- * 1. Only chords marked \wedge should be accented. All others as evenly as possible.
- 2. Only chords that have changed are notated; otherwise—repeat.

Praescio VII

2
10 (8va)

Pno

Midi

fp *cresc.* - - - *fp* (*non cresc.*) *f p f p cresc.* - - -

15 (8va)

Pno

Midi

ff *ff* *fff* *mp* *f* *ff* *p* *rit. poco a poco*

20 (8va)

Pno

Midi

(p) *cresc.* - - - *mf dim.* - - - *p f dim.* - - - *pp f*

Pno

(8va) \wedge

25

ff

mp

loco

mp

ff *8vb*

hold to total decay

N

Midi

ff

e.2

Pno

$\text{♩} = 60$ (8va) \wedge

28

ff

ff

loco

legato

FS

3 5 3 3 5

dim. poco a poco

Midi

$\text{♩} = 60$

e.3

4

31

Pno

Midi

34

Pno

Midi

37

Pno

Midi

mf *dim.*

dim. - - - *p* *mf*

40

Pno

Midi

3 5 3 5 3

dim. *pp*

44

Pno

Midi

f 3 3 3 3

6

49

Pno

dim. molto

8vb

Midi

54

Pno

Freely, slowly

loco

lv

Red.

ff

8vb

e.4

e.5

e.6

Midi

mp

N

N

Praescio VII

54

8va-
loco

p

sfz p
(as fast as possible, single note trill.)

ff

8vb

8vb

8vb

7

Midi

e.7

57

8va-

♩ = 60

8va

♩ = 60

5

pp

f

ff

fff

dim.

loco

8vb

8vb

8vb

Midi

e.8

e.9

N *cresc. poco a poco*

10
71

8va-... loco

riten.

8va-...

loco

riten.

Pno

ppp
(*2ed.*)

Midi

74

accel.

riten.

8va-...

loco

Pno

(*2ed.*)

pp

Midi

77 *Slowly* *a tempo* 7 5 11

Pno

78

(Ped.)

8va-

8vb-

pp

Midi

81 *accel.* - - *pp* *loco* *accel.* - -

Pno

8va-

8vb-

cresc. poco a poco

loco

f

f

e.14

e.15

mp

Midi

pp

92 (non accel./riten.) 4 8 11 $\text{♩} = 60$ accel. - - 93 13

Pno

Midi

e.30 e.31 e.32 e.33 e.34

fff *ff* *ff* *f* *fff*

ff *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

Red.

Pno

Midi

e.35 e.36 e.37 e.38 e.39

fff *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

p *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff* *Red.*

$\text{♩} = 80$ *accel.* $\text{♩} = 100$

14

(non accel./riten.)

♩ = 80

4 8 12

94

pp

fff

95

fff *f* *ff*

(accents only as marked)

96

Pno

Midi

e.40

e.41

e.42

97

100

102 14"

mf cresc.

fff

[take small mallet]

97

100

102

14"

Pno

Midi

e.43

Inside: high sweeps, soft fingers 104

103 ^{8va}

erratic, spaces
pp \longleftarrow *mf* \longrightarrow

p \longleftarrow *mp* \longrightarrow *pp* \longleftarrow *mf* \longrightarrow *mp* \longrightarrow

Inside: high plucks (sparse)

pp *sempre, no accents*

10" 33.6"

e.44 e.45 e.46

Pno

Midi

105

106

(sim.) *pp* *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *p* *p*

gradually increase activity *Plucks, sparse* *8va* *loco*

10" *pp* ^{8va} *loco*

e.47 e.48

Pno

Midi

16

Piano score for measures 107-108. The upper staff (treble clef) features plucked notes with 'x' marks and an 'lv' (leave valve) marking. The lower staff (bass clef) contains a melodic line with dynamics *mp*, *p*, and *ppp*. A 'Red.' (redaction) line is present below the bass staff. A box labeled 'e.49' is positioned above the bass staff. Performance instructions include '(end plucks)', '[leave mallet]', and 'Inside: sweep rapid' with a *p* dynamic. A distance marker '10"' is shown below the staves.

Piano score for measures 108-109. The upper staff (treble clef) shows rapid sixteenth-note passages with dynamics *f* and *mp*. The lower staff (bass clef) features sustained chords with dynamics *p* and *f*. A 'Red.' (redaction) line is present below the bass staff. A box labeled 'e.50' is positioned above the bass staff, and another labeled 'e.51' is positioned below it. Performance instructions include 'rapid' and 'slower'. A distance marker '10"-12"' is shown below the staves.

Pno

113 cont.

8vb

mf

Red.

Midi

Pno

118

mf

f

f

f

loco

mf

p

8vb

Red.

Midi

...129

130

8^{va} = 80

Pno

Midi

mf *cresc.* *sub. p* *cresc.* *ff p* *cresc.*

fff

8^{vb} Ped.

e.53

134

Pno

Midi

cresc. *f ff* *dim.* *simile* N

e.54

20

140

Pno

p *cresc.* *sim.* *mf* *dim.* *ppp* *ff* *f*

3 *sim.* *2* *sim.* *8va* *8va* *loco*

Midi

e.55

e.56

...146

Pno

ff *dim.* *p* *mf* *dim.* *8vb*

(8va) *N*

Midi

e.57

154

Pno

mp *mf* *f* *f* *ffff*

(off with system)

Midi

e.58 e.59 e.60 e.61 e.62

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a piano (Pno) and a MIDI track. The Pno part is written on two staves, treble and bass clef. It starts at measure 154. The dynamics are marked as *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *f*, and *ffff*. There are several slurs and accents over the notes. The MIDI track is a single staff with five boxes labeled e.58, e.59, e.60, e.61, and e.62. Arrows point from these boxes to specific notes in the Pno part. The page number 21 is in the top right corner. The text "(off with system)" is written above the Pno part.