
(In/Re)flection

SoundChaser



Notes

Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage and Edvard Grieg were the influences that informed the creation of this work. The reason for this pairing is not immediately obvious, yet SoundChaser has brought them together in a way that is unique. SoundChaser explains his thought on this relationship:

Stockhausen, Cage and Grieg

John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen created many works using prepared instruments: piano, percussion, etc. The idea of transforming the sound of an instrument can make it both familiar and foreign simultaneously. Part of the pleasure in listening to a piece of music on a prepared instrument is knowing that it will have some qualities that are comforting because

they are familiar, and yet evokes some curiosity or excitement because there is an unknown element.

John Cage is known (in part) for his "chance" music. That is, for any point in a piece there are multiple options available. The selection of an option is left to chance. In a way of thinking, improvisation is like chance. The performer has many options to choose from, and those choices can be made by the element of chance.

Karlheinz Stockhausen wrote a series of pieces designed to be completely improvised: *Aus den sieben Tagen* (From The Seven Days). The pieces were written as texts which performers had to interpret in a musical form, which allowed the musicians the ability to make choices as to how to represent the text in an abstract manner.

Another work by Stockhausen, *Mantra* used a pair of pianos processed through ring modulators to modify their sound. This is not the same as using a prepared instrument in performance. Instead, Stockhausen uses the ring modulators as if they were an element of the piano itself. The ring modulators are used as a device to modify the sound of the pianos, without modifying the essence of the pianos themselves, as would happen with a prepared instrument.

And finally, Edward Grieg is best known for his Piano Concerto, Holberg Suite, and In The Hall of the Mountain King. However, Grieg wrote many smaller pieces of music, including ten books of Lyric Pieces, and a set of 152 Norwegian Melodies. In fact, these smaller, or miniature, pieces of music make up the bulk of Grieg's output over the years.

The part that is intriguing about these pieces is their conciseness. Through hundreds of pieces of music, the majority of them are only a couple of minutes long, and yet they contain complete thoughts. They are well structured balanced, and generally easy to listen to.

Putting Them Together

It wasn't difficult for these ideas to come together. The idea of a Karlheinz Stockhausen inspired works has been in my mind since I took part in performances of *Aus den sieben Tagen* during college. However, sitting down and actually composing a series of texts with the idea of musical performance is something that has been elusive, and will remain that way for a while.

However, with *Mantra* and the idea of using special effects in a different way had an appeal. What if, instead of being used as a modification of the instrument's sound, the effects were used as an integrated part of the performance? What if a ring modulator were actually played?

Composing a piece of music that integrated sound modification as part of the piece can be done. However I am not a composer. I just explore the world of sounds within my abilities.

And, trying to compose a work would defeat the elements that I was seeking: immediacy and spontaneity.

I wanted to experiment with the keyboard, try to get some of the skills I haven't exercised since college back. Pure improvisation seemed to be a good idea. Completely spontaneous improvisation, ignoring the conventions of tonality and rhythm.

The other aspect that I felt was necessary was to keep the pieces short, miniatures of their own. After producing a couple of large form works, I felt it was time to move in the direction of more concise pieces.

With these ideas it was time to start experimenting.

The Structure

Throughout the process of recording these pieces there were several different methods used for experimenting.

1. The simple case: select a single instrument and a single ring modulator. In some cases the ring modulator would be played in real-time during the recording, while other times it was played separately in reaction to the work that had been recorded.
2. Two or more instruments recorded separately, and then processed with a single ring modulator after the recording. There were a couple of variations of this scenario. In some cases the instruments were recorded in reaction to each other (ie, as each track was added the performer listened to the earlier tracks), in others all parts were recorded separately without hearing each other.
3. Is where things got complicated: using multiple instruments, and multiple ring modulators. In some cases multiple instruments played the same part, in some cases they played different parts. Recordings were done in multiple phases, combining the various aspects of the first two methods.

This third method was the least used of the three. It was the most complicated, and the most prone to producing works that were more challenging than intended for this recording. Eventually this method will be explored in more depth.

Another conscious choice was made to only modify the depth and frequency of the ring modulator during the tracks. The sine, triangle and square wave ratios were established before the recording of the ring modulator. Performing with modification to all of the settings is something else that will be explored in future works.

A Few Final Notes

The title of this work is a bit of word play. The best way to say it is "Inflection over Reflection". There is another word in the title, hidden in plain sight, that I believe describes my overall approach to creating these works.

The pieces are titled MiniProvs. From the discussion above, these pieces are improvisations that are short in duration, or miniatures. The titles are derived from these two words: MINIature imPROVisations.

Finally, there are five "Alternative" versions of some of the pieces. While recording the works, I felt a few of them deserved to be heard without the ring modulator effect processing, so they are included on the end of the recording.

Biography



George De Bruin (aka SoundChoser) is a computer nerd, writer, Creative Commons advocate recently turned sonic explorer. After writing about Creative Commons music for the past several years, he felt compelled to take a more direct role in the creation process.

Initially he was going to start this exploration by creating some special effects / sound beds for his podcast. This project lead to the creation of *Floating Through Mist on the Quays* and *Inside The World Machine*. After several friends listened to these works, and one was selected for Rebekkah Hillgraves **At Water's Edge** show on Stillstream Radio, he decided that he wanted to start creating and releasing more music, audio experiments, and other audio works. And not just his own, but works by other artists, musicians and creators.

All of this lead to the accidental establishment of **CerebralAudio** after being unsatisfied with the platforms that were available for releasing recordings. (For more on CerebralAudio, refer to The CerebralRift website, or email SoundChaser via the contact form.)

(In/Re)flection is SoundChaser's third release.

Credits

All songs composed, arranged and performed by SoundChaser.

All instruments: SoundChaser.

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