

PLAY ONGAKU

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ABSTRACT

This artists talk describes the overall process in making a six channel audiovisual installation entitled *Play Ongaku*. It discusses the production process and examines how the installation invites an audience to engage with the work through playful, time based interaction.

音
楽

1. CONCEPT

This project is titled *Play Ongaku*, which is a play on words meaning *Play Music* in English and Japanese. The 'musical' element is significant and inspired by the Japanese symbol for Music 音楽 which is read ongaku meaning "music; musical movement". It is composed of the kanji 音 (read **on**) meaning "sound; noise" and 楽 (read **gaku**) meaning "music".

The 'play' element is reminiscent of Pierre Schaeffer and the 'Musique Concrète' movement within which the word jouer (to play) carried a double meaning: 'to enjoy oneself by interacting with one's surroundings', as well as to operate a musical instrument'.

The poster session and demonstration will address the theme MAKE! by discussing the overall process in making a six channel audiovisual installation and further discuss how the installation invites an audience to engage with the work through playful, time based interaction. *Play Ongaku* is centered around the assemblage of mixed media, acoustic, electronic and sampled material, the aesthetics of which have become the artist's domain. It identifies with his skill as a sound artist, drummer and percussionist, inventing new methods of playing found objects (such as bakelite phone bells and tin toy car wheels) and the sounds they produce using small mechanical hand made mallets inset onto mini servo motors and triggered by sensors within the cabinets.



Figure 1. Play Ongaku detail, October 2015.



Figure 2. Play Ongaku installation - Blue Mountains Cultural Centre Exposé exhibition Play for Time, October 2015

2. COMPONENTS

The electroacoustic cabinets trigger both digital sound design and amplified kinetic objects by close proximity using small Infra red sensors and a range of electronic and mixed media components including at its heart the Arduino Uno R3 microcontroller.



Figure 3. Play Ongaku detail - speaker side and internal electronic components, October 2015.

3. SIGNAL FLOW

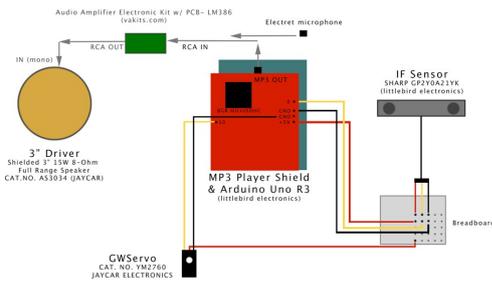


Figure 4. Play Ongaku signal flow for internal electronic components, October 2015.

4. GRAPHIC

The six images inserted on the top plate of each music cabinet were taken from the Japanese symbol for Music, which is read Ongaku 音楽. The symbol was spliced apart into 12 separate sections and graphically manipulated in Adobe Photoshop to form part of the whole when the six cabinets are placed together in two rows side by side. The images were printed on 300 gsm William Turner 100% cotton paper and glued with PVA onto 7mm plywood.

The six images are composed of the bottom section of kanji 音 (read on) meaning "sound; noise" and the top section of 楽 (read gaku) meaning "music".

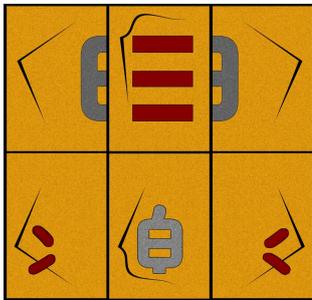


Figure 5. Play Ongaku graphic design - detail of six spliced and printed images, October 2015.

5. PROCESS

The skill set used to produce this work included sound design, digital audio production, location sound recording, woodworking, painting, soldering, wiring, electronic hardware design, graphic design, acrylic fabrication design, programming and coding. The cabinets are made with 4 sides and an inset top face for the printed image, pendulum and servo motor. A fabricated clear acrylic housing is fixed on top of each cabinet. The bottom of each cabinet is open to allow the power supplies to feed down through the plinth, which support each cabinet. The cabinets are screwed on top of the plinths on either side and are made from 7mm

plywood. The dimensions are 211mm (D) X 149mm (W) X 190mm (H) based on a smaller version of the Yamaha NS10 studio monitor, which is 382mm x 215mm x 199mm. The cabinets are not sealed and contain one shielded 3" 15W 8-Ohm full range speaker.

6. AUDIO

The six channel audio mix is produced from individual mono audio files and live sound, which include:

- location sound recordings of a bird taken in my backyard, sampled and looped
- a bass synth rhythm, sampled and looped
- a recording of an old style mechanical clock, sampled and looped
- a recording of a scratch turntable and wheel, sampled and looped
- an Electret microphone pickup of a bell taken from an old style Bakelite phone
- an Electret microphone pickup of a tin wheel rolling over a metal trail, taken from an old style racing car found in a junk shop in Blackheath.

The digital audio was mixed, edited, processed and produced in the Logic Pro DAW and the export mono audio files were transferred to micro SD flash cards and inserted into the MP3 shields for audio playback.

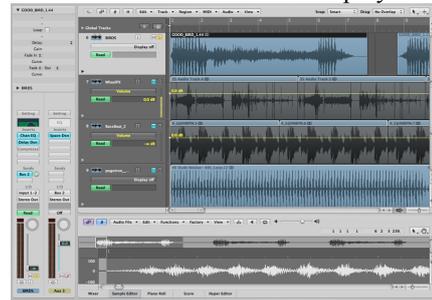


Figure 6. Play Ongaku Logic Pro audio session, October 2015.

7. CREDITS

Play Ongaku is one of four installations produced in collaboration with composer/programmer Solange Kershaw for the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre Exposé exhibition Play for Time, exhibited in September/October 2015.

The artist would like to thank the Bundanon Trust for the valuable time spent in residence to produce this work, composer/programmer Solange Kershaw and the exhibition team at the BMCC for their help and support in exhibiting the work.