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MUSC103

Final Composition Reflection

An overview of my composition assignment: ♩= 110, Key = B ♭ Major, Bass Clef, 4/4

I started the final composition by building from my 4th composition assignment. I particularly wanted to focus on the sample I used and find other ways to play with it using audio effects. I started by writing a chord sequence in F major that was around 8 measures long. This original idea/piece was much slower than my final result. However, after the in-class presentations, I realized that a lot of people were focused on F major. To add variety, I decided to switch the key and I drew from previous creative projects I had not yet used in my compositions. I looked through my old samples and recordings and stumbled upon a synth sequence I had made. I decided to use this sequence as the centerpiece of my composition assignment.

I then switched my key to B-flat major (the key my synth sequence was in). I wasn't able to figure out how to record from my synth track, but I was able to hook my synth up to my mac as a midi input which let me play the chord progression I used with the sounds/instruments in ableton. My chord progression is Gm7, FM, E ♭ M7, m3 (C→E ♭), P5 (F→C), and Gm. The chord progression goes for 4 bars (all the chords are in their root form with more notes stacked above). One reason I decided to use this sample (beyond that it sounds epic) is that I felt it fit really nicely with "Motive 1." I did end up slowing the motive to half its tempo (from 110 to 55, I did this by just doubling the length of each note), for the alteration to the motive, I shifted it down two octaves to C2 and C3.

After forming the base of my composition, I focused on the vibe I wanted to create. I ended up with a more ominous sound than I expected (though I did want it to feel slightly overwhelming in this sense). I wanted my piece to embody a sense of flow and mental clarity, but I also wanted it to feel strong and powerful. I started to work on these goals by playing with arpeggios. Both my 2 arpeggios use my original chord progression and are at a speed/rate of 29.9ms (I don't actually know what ms means, I was not happy with the limitations of the "rate" so I clicked a button labeled "ms" which gave me way more control over the rate of the arpeggio). The first arpeggio uses the "up" template, and I chose this as I like the long pulsing

sound created by the speed of the notes. The second arpeggio uses the “updown” template which fits nicely in between the two kick drums playing on each beat.

After creating the arpeggios, I played around with drums. I originally wanted to make a large sequence of various drums, but after playing around with this idea on ableton, it felt too overwhelming within muy piece. I decided to use 2 kick drums and have a bass playing during the intro (I wanted people to really FEEL the music and bass when it played). My first drum was the “Melt Kit” which has a clear punctual sound, and my second kick I stole from Jonah (he shared it with me) (the “Viral Kit”).

Next, I focused on stepping into my piece in a slower manner (we discussed that my first draft threw listeners in too quickly). To do this I added a low, mellow synth beat, and a bass playing on each chord. Two piano parts which I created by just improvising in the music studios while listening to my piece. Finally, I added cello to the entire composition. Every time I have composed something, it has always sounded better with cello (Isn’t the cello just the best!) I mostly improvised and saved various snippets in the track. There were a couple instances where I made sure to have the cello really stand out (the middle and end of the piece).

For the notational elements, I notated the shifted “Motive 1” and my chord progression. For the chords, I only notated the first set of notes, but my piece has many rea[eating notes spanning multiple octaves (the main reason I decided not to attempt transcribing the chords). I notated the individual chords, and the actual track in my composition (the lower transcription on my Final Comp notation submittal).

I am pleased with the way my piece turned out. I think it is strong and eerie but also beautiful. It feels lonely to me yet full. After listening to my draft, my friends said it is the type of music that should play if they were to wake up alone in an apocalyptic world with plants taking over the cities and world (I don’t know if I agree with this, but I did feel it had a certain connection to the natural world when I was composing it). I think this connection is interesting since my piece is built around a synth track that doesn't sound very natural.