



University of
East London

PA6033 Advanced Practice and Enterprise –

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Introduction

My project was titled “Rhythm of Eternal Peace: A light-themed collaborative live performance”.

With this project, I will showcase how light can be incorporated accordingly with a live musical performance through the use of DMX (Digital Multiplex) and musical instruments. My thoughts started developing when I saw him interact with the people around him through music. One of the main things that attracted me was the use of different live instruments, including string, wind, and acoustic instruments, which he succeeded in creating a whole new perspective using the looper. Every audience member was provided with headphones to experience the mix personally by every individual, which I find exceptional because it is very rare to see an audience experience a live performance using headphones. Another thing that inspired me is that I can experiment with playing live instruments and add them to the looper with my original compositions and, upon that, add a live lead performance. The way FKJ (*FKJ Live at La Fée Electricité, Paris 2017*) presented his gear setup was impressive, and I had a set of ideas in my mind. I will be having three to four gears for my performance, along with live lighting.

Performance Material - Technical Development

My whole setup was based on Looper, a plugin available in Ableton. To be honest, I had very little idea about Looper at the initial stage. Once I started getting my hands on it, I slowly realised its potential, which gave me the confidence to perform. My very first step was to plan what I would perform

musically. Once the musical idea was set, I could move on to its technical implementation by making note of all the technical requirements I may need.

I sat for days and days to create an original piece of music. Developing musically was the biggest challenge I faced because every time I created one piece, I struggled to add the next layer, and so on. But finally, I came up with one piece of music lost in my mind many years ago. Once I was satisfied with the composition, I worried about how to develop it technically. All I had in mind was to perform the best I could. I wanted to use every instrument and MIDI possibility to develop a wow performance for the audience. When I proposed this project during my SEMA, where my lecturer talked about lights, my ideas suddenly struck, and I started to think about incorporating them into my final performance project. I know it's challenging because I wanted to play live instruments, making it more difficult for me to manage lights simultaneously. I explored how to incorporate live lighting into my project, for which I had sessions with Jules, one of our university technicians. DMX lights could achieve this and be controlled using MIDI information. For this, I researched a lot about DMXIS from Gray (*Gray, Controlling lights with Ableton live (MIDI to DMX - ENTTEC DMXIS) 2017*), which could be controlled using Ableton in real-time. However, due to the venue limitations, I could only incorporate lighting already available at the venue.

When approaching the musical setup for my project, I used one main keyboard, which is YAMAHA SX900, as MIDI and audio, and a keytar. The main reason why I chose SX900 was because its key response as a MIDI keyboard was perfectly suitable for my genre of composition. I was playing a lead at the end, and I felt using the keytar would make it livelier as it had live pitch touch sense and a comfortable modulation panel, which is very suitable for a live performance. Most importantly, I believe this masterpiece would excite the audience and could make the vibe pleasant and strong. Another device I incorporated was Touch OSC (*TouchOSC 2008*) on an iPad to control the auto filter, reverb, and echo parameters of my loops created during the live performance. The iPad was connected using MIDI to the computer so that I could map the parameters to the Touch OSC. Finally, all these things required one platform to work on, which is the main one called

Ableton. Working in Ableton was made easier and more efficient with my lecturer and fellow members' guidance.

Performance - Technology Development and Delivery

I aimed to give my audience a hassle-free performance. My inspiration was the FKJ, who performed in Paris and provided a good 17 minutes of mental calm for the audience. He used looping techniques to create such an atmosphere.

Initially, all I had was a musical composition of mine that was in $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature at 120 BPM, which I recorded using a piano. Also, I had less idea of how to develop this act, but I sat for hours arranging its layers stage by stage. Later, I got an idea of how to achieve my goal using a keyboard, a keytar, Touch OSC, and Ableton, which included plugins and virtual instruments.

Kicked off with an Ableton session with Alicia's key piano MIDI track, which had some Hall reverb. My method was to use Looper for every track that I created and add them individually with a required number of bars, respectively. Secondly, I added a string ensemble by the symphony series for 8 bars to fill in instead of pads. Thirdly, I added an arpeggio track of synth pads by Spectra Sonic Omnisphere for another 8 bars, which had an auto filter that was mapped to Touch OSC on the iPad using MIDI to control in real-time. Fourthly, I added a bass guitar track by Scarbee MM bass amped crunch. Fifthly, I added a drum track by Abbey Road, which I felt was really a modern drum kit suitable for my performance with a well-equalized and enveloped kick and snare. Lastly, I had a lead amped guitar by Electric Mint for 16 bars that highly reverberated, adding an appropriately shaped tone to the entire composition. I added an 8.89 dB of gain to balance the mix in real-time.

Once the loops were fully created, I wanted to play lead on my keytar, so I used Electric Mint again with moderate reverberation. This was the best moment of the whole performance for me as the audience was more excited and interactive during this time of performance. Before my performance, I had to set my stage layout. I had my main keyboard on the right going to the Ableton as MIDI and keytar at the front because I wanted

to come to the front and interact with the audience during that time. I also had my Touch OSC on the table near the main keys and a spare Qwerty keyboard for accessing new tracks and overdub to the Looper without any hassle. The Ableton output was through the Behringer UMC1820 interface, whose further output was sent to the main PA mixer by PreSonus.

I was a little nervous before the event started, but the support from my fellow members and lecturer and the rehearsal session gave me confidence in achieving without any stage fear.

Performance Video (16:20 – 27:20) :

https://youtu.be/X9Cg3XXr_M?si=tOIXIG-6j5LjndSC&t=972

Please watch the video from 16:20 to 27:20.

Development Log/Context

Firstly, I was inspired by FKJ's performance in Paris using Looper. In it, he approached the audience through personalised headphones, making them sit around him and creating a whole atmosphere for the viewers, taking them to a different realm of music. The idea that came into my mind was why not try this on the people around me to give them musical peace between their stressful day-to-day lives. I looked forward to that particular performance day where I could communicate that music really matters in our daily lives. Watching FKJ's performance, I noticed certain things that are capable of changing the mental state of people who watch or attend the show. Firstly, the background illuminated with lights created an amazing atmosphere, along with the setup he arranged with his gears. The placement of his live instruments, MIDI keyboards, synthesisers, laptop and even the arrangement of his cables were neat, tidy, and presentable.

I also discovered different artists like Edsheraan (Sheeran, 2012) and Charlie Puth (Puth, 2022), who used similar techniques for one of their stage performances, which inspired me more. Researching Looping improved my technical knowledge about certain equipment. I started discovering new techniques and methods by which I could achieve my

performance goal. However, what challenged me more about other methods was the equipment requirements, which are high in budget.

Yes, Ableton is highly potential; I cannot deny that. Its capability of providing industry-standard output is much higher compared to other products. It already has powerful plugins and effects that can change the music production game upside down. A few plugins I used for this project are Auto filters, Kontakt virtual instruments, Spectra Sonic Omnisphere, and Touch OSC. Touch OSC was highly efficient, especially with Ableton. I got the privilege of understanding how high its potential is when incorporated with Ableton. It has an editor available for the desktop called Touch OSC editor to customise how I require them to act and map them to any buttons on the Ableton. It can be performed over cable or remotely via Wi-Fi.

In the beginning, I had very little knowledge of its potential. But laying my hand on it over and over again, I started realising its potential was way higher than I believed. It has real-time quantisation, Overdub and play, and the ability to select the number of bars required, speed, and reverse what we recorded. The only sample I created was the clap and hi-hat in $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature at 120 BPM to use instead of a metronome. This sample was recorded and exported from Logic Pro.

Overall, I had enough materials for my performance. The feedback from my lecturer at every stage helped me to shape my preparations in a better way. Last but not least, the knowledge gained from the university, i.e., technically and theoretically, helped me a lot in this project, giving me enough courage and confidence to perform.

Personal Development and Reflection

Exploring other artists and their methods of music production helped me shape my method in a better way. Combining mine with other artists' methods, I tried to develop new techniques in music production. This project helped me to gain confidence and lose my stage fear, building a new professional person out of me. As a music producer, it is essential to have the courage to say yes to any genre that comes my way. Also, this

helped me be very efficient in producing music and giving the desired output. I will be exploring more relevant and efficient production techniques, shaping my career by updating my knowledge day by day. I believe being a digital musician is a lucky factor as the world of music is getting updated technologically. To excel in this competitive world, I need to be updated in every aspect of music. I also wish to get into the teaching profession as I believe sharing what I learned is the best way to improve myself.

References:

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