

MUCP 4680/5680

Fall 2009

Project #2: Tape Music

Relive the glory days of tape music -- complete with equipment designed for other purposes, limited sound sources, and quirky and unreliable machines! Create a new work of music the way the "old masters" did.

You will work in teams of two persons. At any given time, one will run tape, the other operate a sound source (and/or the mixer). Each team will have approximately 6 minutes' worth of tape at 15 ips (12 minutes at 7.5 ips) on a plastic reel.

You will compose a work at least 3 minutes in duration, containing at least two basic kinds of material: short gestures and sustained textures.

Available sound sources are:

- Shure SM58 microphone
- Paia Theremin
- HP oscillator (sine wave)
- Olson oscillator (produces a very impure tone)
- spring reverberator
- turntable (bring your own records; please, no extended and untreated quotations)

The patch between these devices is marked on the mixing board. Use Mix-B level (pre-fader) to mix sound sources into the reverberator. Use Aux sends 1-4 (post-fader) to mix sound sources into channels 1-4 of the Sony four-track recorder. You will later use Aux 5-6 (also post-fader) to record your final result to digital.

Available techniques (* indicates you are *required* to use these ones):

* assemblage: cut out gestures or fragments of sound; label, sort, and reassemble

- turn off "tape lift" and run the tape by hand to find cut points, then mark with grease pencil
- use leader tape to create silences – the 7" reel width measures a bit less than 1 second at 7.5 ips
- use splicing tape to keep fragments safely "pinned" to the white board as you work

* overdubbing:

- to synchronise, use simul-sync mode on one or more tracks while you record onto another
- to make room for more tracks, record output of 2 or 3 tracks into another tracks

tape looping:

- splice a loop from a recording you've made on the Sony deck
- move the loop to the Akai and play it from there (use the reel-on-a-stick to tension the tape)

reversing:

- easiest way: record onto track 3, flip the reels, and play back from track 2 (or rec 4 – play 1)
- you can use the Akai deck to play back this way

tape delay:

- record playback output from one track into another
- for feedback, record into the same channel (but be careful with the Aux levels if you do that!)

filtering:

- use the EQ controls on the mixing board to alter the timbre of sounds you are recording

reverberation:

- you may mix freely between all dry, all wet, or anywhere in between
- if you must strike the spring reverb, do so on the right-hand spring cap (black plastic)

speed alteration:

- to slow playback "drag" the reel that's spooling off - not the takeup reel - with your hand
- on Sony 4-track, you have three speed options, each an octave apart from the next one
- on Sony 4-track, get a pitch bend using the speed adjust knob
- on Sony 4-track, you can leave "tape lift" off and turn reels by hand or use fast wind