Sound Environments:

Fostering Diverse Compositional Practices in an Undergraduate Music and New Media Program

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Brief Background

Bachelor of Music in Composition and New Media

- Interdisciplinary degree with Music and Digital Media Department at University of Massachusetts Lowell.

- Planned rollout in F2016.

- Degree balances commercial and art-centered learning objectives with practical technology implementation.
Portable Recorders and Digital Technology

Influencing Curricular Design

Ease of use for novice recordists.

Portability inspires sound gathering in diverse environments.

Archival and transfer of files is quick and seamless.

Clean signal for uncompressed audio.

Cost-effective and rugged.

Introduces beginners to field recording techniques.
Digital Tools and Participatory Culture

Creation & Consumption – Millennial Composers

**Technology**
- Online Music Communities
- Open-Access Software
- DAW-Influenced Compositions
- Global Information Exchange and Collaboration

**Values**
- Less Concern for Profit
- Transparency in Information Access
- Simple Attribution Policy is Favorable
- Many Communities are Self-Policing

- Creation and Reuse of Original Content
- Remixing and Gaming Communities as Examples

Learning with Purpose
Digital Synthesis and Remixing

Collaborative Composition Assignment

- Students upload raw sounds to a secure internal server.
- Sounds are edited and logged for quality and length but no processing.
- Students must use only sounds from other class members to create a new piece.
- Students import sounds into standard DAW for arranging, mixing and manipulation.
- Students workshop their piece and discuss creative approaches with original sound author.
- Restrictions force the student to think critically to conceive new ideas.
Learning Objectives

Creative-Technological-Cultural

- Sound Art
- Field Recording
- Millennial Trends
- Notions of Authorship
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking

Learning with Purpose
Future Considerations

Planning and Implementation

- Discussions with administration, IT, and faculty to implement the right server for file-sharing purposes.

- Supplement lab exercises with relevant music business and copyright discussions.

- Report preliminary results for future dissemination and qualitative case studies.

- Balance contemporary and traditional methodologies to enhance student learning in specific courses and the degree as a whole.
Thank You!

Please email Daniel_Walzer@uml.edu for a PDF copy of the full paper.
This presentation is an adaptation of a recently accepted article called “Sound Exchange: Reframing Music Composition Educational Practice” for Leonardo Music Journal 25 – “The Politics of Sound” (Walzer 2015). © MIT Press and ISAST.

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References


