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Mediating Musical Identity - Designing and playing walking bass on electronic instruments

In this *lecture-recital* the author presents and demonstrates a number of electronic instruments purposely designed to perform walking bass lines in a free jazz context.

A point of departure is that any musical software mediate aesthetical preferences of its designer in general, and particularities when designing and programming special purpose electronic instruments. Likewise, the identity of a musical work is mediated through instruments employed and performing musicians. This is not a new claim, e.g. Joel Chadabe states: “[...] the instrument is inseparable from the music it produces.” (Chadabe, 2001, p. 271). Another claim is based on thoughts on sonic identity, which is about repeatability and sameness, e.g. expressed in the theory of *Permanence and Variation* by Pierre Schaeffer, that essentially states: “Permanence of characteristics, variation of values” (In Chion 1983 p. 54), or as Gary Peters, with a Deleuzian term, describes such as *different sameness* (2018, p 155). A salient feature in all forms of jazz accompaniment since the 30s is the walking bass, which is “a line played pizzicato on a double bass in regular crotches in 4/4 metre, the notes usually moving stepwise or in intervallic patterns not restricted to the main pitches of the harmony”.¹ The most developed virtual instrument of mine is the Walking Machine, which is thoroughly described in my thesis *A Field of Possibilities* (Nilsson, 2011) as well as in the ICMC 2008 proceedings. There are however a number of predecessors, as well as successors up to a present rendering, which together make up a work story of virtual walking bass instruments. Heard in the rear-view window, despite using quite different technologies, concepts and algorithms, it displays different sameness, variations of a permanence that mediates aesthetic preferences of its inventor and player, in this case within the realm of walking bass accompaniment.

Proposal for a Lecture – Recital, within artistic research

Technical needs: sound system and video projector, table for electronic instruments

¹ <https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29835>