Self Critical Practice Journal

22.03.2021 - START

- Created a chord progression for piano and printed it to audio, so I can limit myself.
- Added an arpeggiated synthesizer still in MIDI (not happy with the sound source yet);
- Types of manipulation used - Textural and Rhythmic.

I created an Audio Effect Rack with 2 parallel chains: one dry and one with an effect chain: Reverb, Bit Reduction, Delay, and another Reverb. I wanted to create a dynamic dimension to the piano, by applying bit reduction to the reverb and manipulate its intensity throughout the progression. After that the sound goes into a delay set on 1/8d note that better separates the wet signal from the dry one, and then enhance the dimension with an ending reverb.

First reverb is full wet (because it is in parallel) and the delay and the last reverb are at 50% respectively 68%, in order to just create an ambience of the crushed reverb.

The manipulation sounds very interesting, but I am not sure how and where it would fit a track (probably in the intro).

Net time I will try to a melodic manipulation, either on its own or combined with one of the other two.

24.03.2021 - 2nd Session

- PRINTED THE ARPEGGIATOR
- Types of Manipulation used - Melodic

I chose to keep the piano part as an intro, in combination with the arpeggiator.

For the arpeggiator I have created a parallel chain containing a LFO Filter, but with the LFO deactivated so I can use only the filter in a melodic way. From filter I am manipulating the resonance in order to introduce the counter melody in the sound, and the frequency in order to control its pitch. In order to have a rhythm to the new melody, I have used the quantise function of the plugin, which introduces the sound it only after a specific time when engaged. I have also used delay in order to create the tape stop effect, also a melodic manipulation in which we can pitch up or down.

Interesting effect, I like how it integrates with the piano manipulation, but I am not happy with the frequency manipulation, because it's not in key. I have to find a solution to this, as I would like to manipulate it with the WAVE Ring in the live performance.

For the next time I want to Introduce a rhythmic element and manipulate it as well. Maybe drums, which work very well with stutter edit, an audio processor that is based on a multitude of effects such as delay, bit reduction, etc. This should improve the dynamics of the track, but again my goal for now is not to create a track, rather just experiment and find powerful effect chains.

25.03.2021 - 3rd Session (VIDEO INCLUDED)

- Manipulating pre-recorded drums
- Controlling the pitch of the Resonant filter;
- New manipulation implemented - rhythmic;

I have found a way to control the pitch of the resonant filter and have it in key by using 2 plugins: a pitch shifter from Kilohearts and Autotuna, a Max for Live device that allows me to use a certain scale of pitch correction. this way I could keep the manipulation in C minor. In this type of manipulation the ring is very sensitive the pitch can change to the slightest hand movement, but at the same time it can allow me to create interesting fast melodies.

For the drums I have used the stutter edit and played random midi notes to trigger random gestures, in order to make it as an improvisation. This approach is not very stable and cannot guarantee a solid manipulation, and can easily become confusing. Nothing very complex has to be done, I just have to search for gestures that are suitable to the audio track in order to have a rhythm that can complement the track and not overcloud it.

At this point I think that what I arranged became a bit overdone in terms of manipulation. Because I had to manipulate also the arpeggiator and the drums, I wasn't able to manipulate the piano sound, and had to leave it as an automation. This situation made me realise how important to think ahead of what I should manipulate and when in the track, in order to have something cohesive and pleasant for the listener. I am thinking to start a new track in which I first create a solid musical idea, and then implement the manipulation in my process.

Also maybe would be better to introduce the manipulation by using one category at a time such as : First Part - melodic , Second part - textural , 3rd part - rhythmic. This could provide separation and leave the possibility to comprehend much more easily the manipulations.

04.04.2021 - 4th session

New Idea, First a bit of arrangement, by introducing instruments gradually

- Manipulations implemented: textural & rhythmical
- Effects used: Distortion, Pitch-shifted Delay, Vocoder (from preset audio effect rack);

I start again with an arpeggiator, but manage to manipulate the distortion to introduce the piano and also build tension. That is followed by using Crystallizer, a pitch-shifted delay, which proves how powerful delay can be, and that it can be used in creating melodies as well, not just tape-stop effects. For the Piano I have used a preset Audio effect rack that came with ableton, and it utilises a vocoder effect that brings noise to the attack. After that I engage a filter and a flanger effect to develop the sound into something further. What is different from the previous one is that the sounds are individually manipulated one after another, meaning that the first manipulated sound is used to build tension and announce the other, and so on. I like this approach and seems to have creative results. The only problem would be the latency they create, so maybe keep in mind to recreate specific effects with ableton's stock plugins when creating a full production.
I feel more comfortable by manipulating sounds one at a time, as I can do it with ease and actually helps with arranging, as it can become sort of the main lead in the track. As well, I have used the manipulation categories as follows: textural -> rhythmical -> textural. Maybe would be interesting to follow up with melodic instead of textural the third time.

07.04.2021 - 5th session

- Added a Melody that generates another melody with pitch-shifted delay;
- Printed a simple sine wave that is manipulated using a resonant filter and bit-crush, which will create an effect similar to chimes percussion.

The added melody is serving the track but the melody generated by delay works only in octaves, which doesn't really make it special. This has to do with the notes that are in the melody, meaning that if we would want to use a delay pitched a perfect fifth above, we would have to check if the generated counter-melody is still the same key with our track. The bit-crusher is manipulated by increasing the downsampling and reproduces the sound of chimes, which can create interesting transitions. After that I use the resonant filter to introduce a small rhythm to the plain sine wave, and in combination with the bitcrusher sounds very present.

I feel I'm getting closer and closer to the approach that can really serve my music, and every finding seems to lead to a new one. I really enjoyed what the bitcrusher did to the plain sine wave, it really made it sound unique. I will try the pitch shifted delay with a more simple melody and a different interval than the octave, maybe something can come out of that. Also, the approach of using different types of manipulations one after another really builds the track for me, as I

feel that nothing similar can come next, and this can be very pleasant for the listener. Still, I have to be careful to not overdo it, as for this musical idea I think that the manipulation is a bit clouding.

I want to try and manipulate a single sound in more than one or two ways, and see if that would lead me to a musical idea, maybe not the whole arrangement but at least a basic sketch.

15.04.2021 - 6th session

- Printed 2 short loops from my analog synthesizer - one with a cutoff filter, one without, in order to differentiate the sections.
- Created a small arrangement in which I manipulate only the synth sound
- Manipulations used: Textural->Melodic->Rhythmic
- Effects manipulated: Vocoder effect rack, saturation, pitch-shifted delay and a filter LFO
- Improvements: effects flow one into another; a controlled pitch-shifted delay.

I created a short track around one main sound, which has been manipulated with different types of effects throughout the arrangement, in order to bring something new, more engaging. I start with a vocoder that brings a percussive air to the sound, and then saturation to add spontaneous accents, this create the textural manipulation, which is followed by a soundtoys effect rack, that has at base a Crystallizer, a pitch shifted delay that creates a counter melody. In the end I manipulate the synth track using a very fast filter LFO, at 64Hz, meaning it starts to resonate itself and becomes audible, thus the grittyness of the sound.

I feel enthusiastic about how the manipulation ended in this experiment, and it proved me that this idea of changing effects taking in consideration their type of manipulation is a very useful approach, which I am very happy that translates into my music. The overall arrangement though feeling incomplete and not very polished, gives me courage to try and transform this experiment into an actual track, which could represent my actual intervention. This would mean to expand the arrangement and implement even more manipulation, but in a very careful way so that it doesn’t seem forced.