ADAM VIDIKSIS
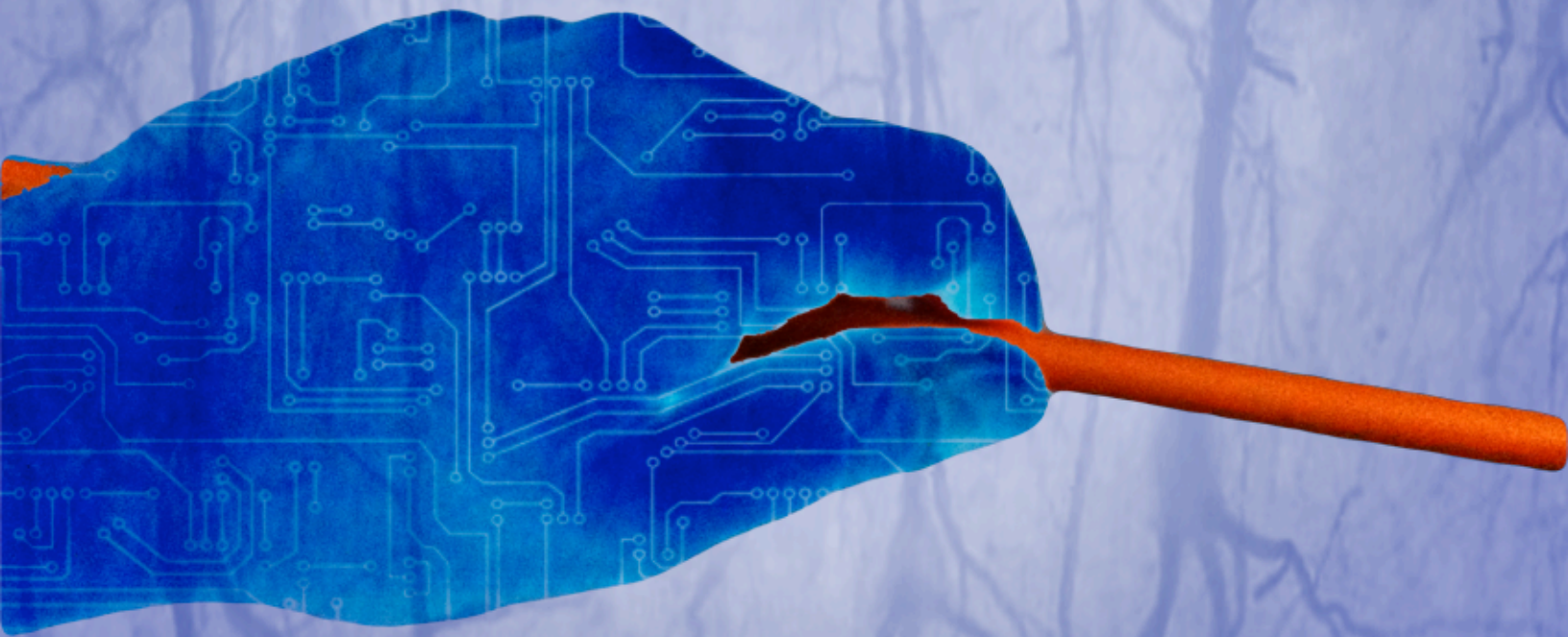
synapse_circuit

for percussion
and electronics

ADAM VIDIKSIS

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2012

About the composer:

Adam Vidiksis is a composer, conductor, and percussionist whose interests span from historically informed performance to the cutting edge of music technology. Born in 1979 on Staten Island, the least populated borough of New York City, his musical studies began on the piano at age four. As a child, he could frequently be found hitting nearly everything around him in order to experience the sound it would make: Adam soon discovered his love of creating new musical possibilities and his passion for all things percussion. His music often explores sound, science, and the intersection of humankind with the machines we build.

Adam's compositions have been performed throughout North America and Europe. Commissioned by International Composers and Interactive Artists, he composed and conducted a new work performed by the "Black Sea Symphony," the orchestra of the Oleg Danovski National Theater of Opera and Ballet in Constanta, Romania. Exceptional ensembles have performed his work, including the Momenta Quartet, the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, and the percussion ensembles of New York University and the University of Alabama. His compositions have been heard at the SEAMUS National Conference, the National Student Electronic Music Event at the Peabody Conservatory, the Huntsville New Music Festival, Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, Raven Stadium, the Guthman Musical Instrument Competition at Georgia Tech, the Toronto Electroacoustic Symposium, and the Licino Refice Conservatorio di Musica in Frosinone, Italy. The Omaha Symphony performed Adam's work From the Ashes as part of the symphony's 2012 New Music Symposium. Other notable performances include the National Conference of the College Music Society in San Diego, the Society of Composers, Incorporated Regional Conference in Canyon, TX, Nashville's Soundcrawl Festival, the Electroacoustic Barn Dance, and a commission from Philadelphia's Network for New Music.

A devoted advocate of new music, Adam serves as conductor of the Temple Composers Orchestra. His deep interest in bringing new works to life has led him to conduct numerous premieres, including composer Gene Coleman and Ensemble N_JP on the 2011 Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts, the Composers Seminar Ensemble at New York University, and various other works with the Black Sea Symphony in Romania. For seven years, Adam directed the wind ensemble at Drew University in Madison, NJ, premiering a number of new pieces with that ensemble. He presently holds the position of assistant conductor of the Delaware County Symphony in Aston, PA.
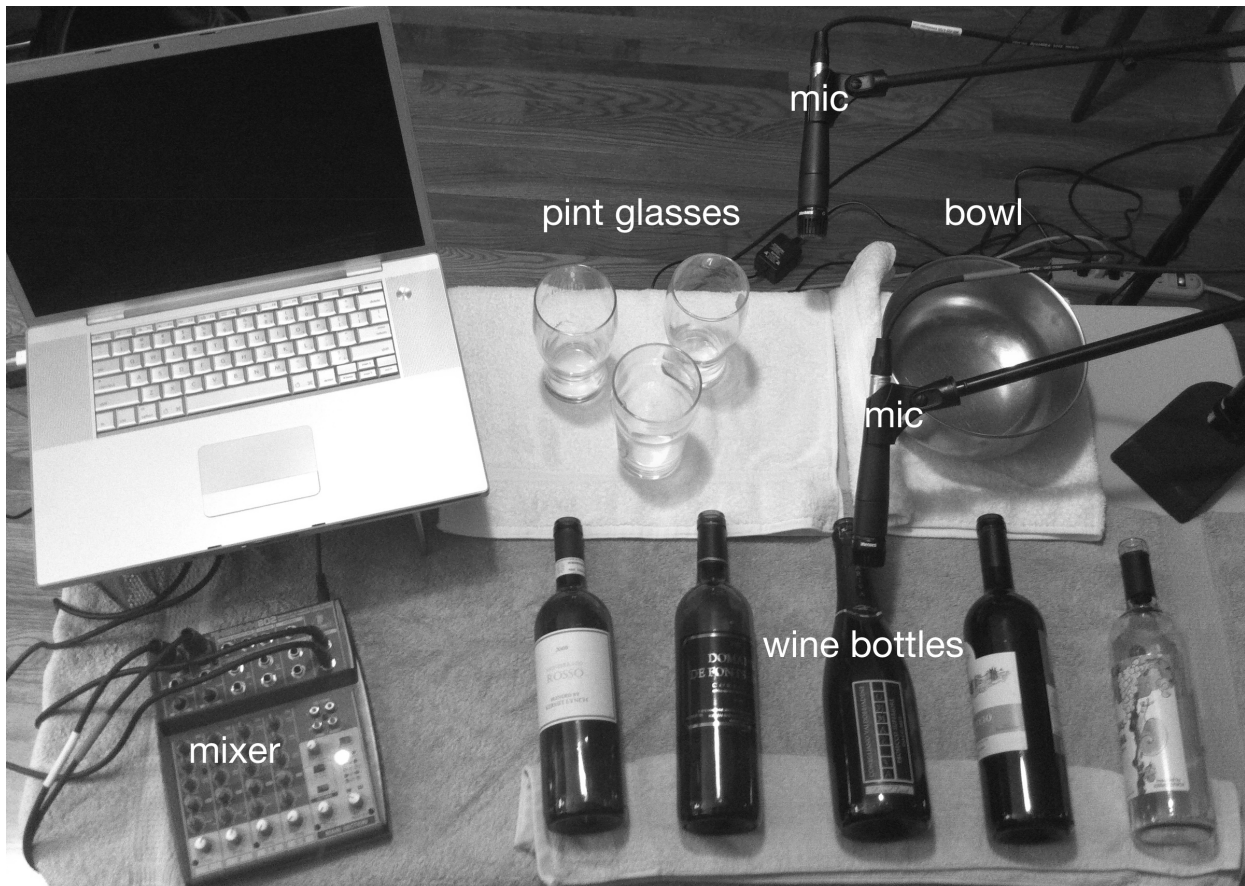
Adam currently lives in Wilmington, Delaware. He holds a Master of Music degree from New York University where his teachers included Dinu Ghezzo, Marc Antonio-Consoli, and Justin Dello Joio. He is earning a doctorate of musical arts degree in music composition at Temple University, where he has studied with Cynthia Folio, Maurice Wright, and Joo Won Park. There he teaches classes in music theory and computer music. His works are available through HoneyRock Publishing.

For more information and music, please visit www.vidiksis.com.

Program note:

What is the voice inside the machine? While computers perform tasks that extend the abilities of our own minds, they increasingly act as independent entities. *Synapse_circuit* serves not as a direct analogy between these two ideas, but rather as a symbol of human-machine interaction. The computer augments the percussionist's performance, and improvises sounds based on his or her playing using algorithmic processes in Pure Data. The percussion performance consists of glasses, bottles, and a bowl, which the performer hits, scrapes, blows and sings into. All sounds produced by the computer are derived from the real time performance. Both human and machine performers work from a score, but listen and respond to the performance of the other. Synapses and circuits – human and computer – together find the music inside the machine. This work honors the complexity both of the human mind and its digital counterpart, taking us from wonder, to discovery, to celebration.

Setup:

Legend:
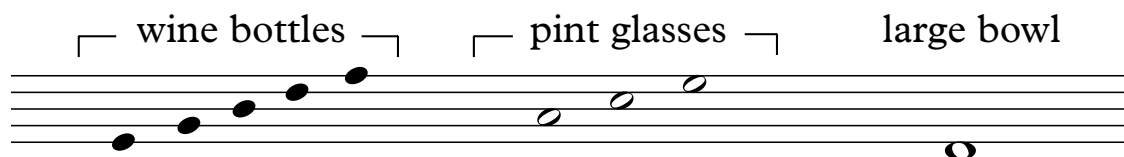
Performance notes:

This work requires a pair of medium yarn mallets with wooden shafts, a pair of medium rubber mallets, five glass marbles, towels or blankets, five resonant wine bottles of different pitches, three pint glasses of different pitches, and a large glass or metal bowl. It also requires at least two microphones, a computer, and the equipment necessary to run the recorded sound into the computer (mixer, etc.). The five wine bottles and three pint glasses should each have a distinct pitch when hit from the side. The large bowl should be quite resonant, with a decay of four seconds or more. All materials should be placed on towels or blankets on the floor or a sturdy table. This will prevent any superfluous sound from the materials striking the surface upon which they rest. The wine bottles should lay on their side and a marble should be placed in each. The bottles must be angled slightly toward their neck so that the marble rests in the rounded shoulder of the bottle. This can be achieved by placing a folded towel under the butt of the bottle, angling it up slightly. The butt of the bottle should face the player. The majority of the strikes on the wine bottles will occur on the side of the bottle as close to the butt as possible. This will minimize the rattle created by the marble, except at very loud dynamics. This is the desired effect. The microphones should be placed as seen in the accompanying diagram. If available, more microphones can be used for a superior capture of the percussive sound.

The lines of the staff indicate the wine bottles in ascending pitch. The upper three spaces indicate the pint glasses, again ascending in pitch. The large bowl is marked below the staff. The pitch of the materials used may be determined by the performer, but should be sorted from low to high. Most notational figures in the work are approximate in rhythm, but should be performed accurately with regard to texture, tone, and sound quality. I encourage the performer to explore and improvise with these gestures as a guide. It is important that the techniques and equipment used at each moment are carefully executed. Also, changes of technique, gesture, and dynamics, as well as structural rests should occur precisely at the time indicated. Timecodes marked as "approx." should be followed closely, but do not require the player to line up with the timer exactly. When a simple timecode is given, as in "3:10" with no "approx." marking, the gesture must be performed precisely at that moment.

The opening gesture should occur approximately one or two seconds after the timer has begun. This figure should be regular and somber. The tapping of the mallet shaft on the rim of the glass should produce a clear sweep of overtones, ascending in pitch as one moves along the shaft from where the player grips the mallet to its head. The glass should be held at an angle that best enhances the overtones produced by the tapping. Often, this is roughly 15 degrees from the mallet shaft. The performer should experiment to find the optimal sound for his or her materials. The glass should be held firmly so that all resonance in the glass is immediately muted.

At 1:10, the large bowl is struck normally with the yarn mallets, followed by the pint glasses with the shaft of the mallets. It is important the length of the shaft be used to hit the glasses, not just the tip. The optimal method for this is to hold the mallets perpendicular with the ground so that as much shaft as possible can have contact with the side of the glass. At 1:19, the bowl is again struck normally. The player should then switch to the medium rubber mallets. These mallets will be used for the duration of the performance.

The repeated figures at 2:05 should be performed very evenly. They should be played an indeterminate number of times over the course of the two crescendo-decrescendo gestures. The first should move from near-silence to *mezzo forte* and back, the second should climax at *forte*. Each crescendo-decrescendo should take about 15 seconds. The transition to the new rhythmic gesture at the *fortissimo* marking should be very smooth and continuous, as should the changes at timecode 2:50 and 3:00. The final gesture before 3:10 should be performed with one hand, while the player picks up one of the wine bottles with the other and prepares to blow into it.

The performer may select any one of the bottles to be blown into. (I have notated the part as the bottle of the most center pitch.) If another bottle is used, the figures requiring the remaining bottles should still match the notated figures from high to low. The sung part is notated in C, but should be performed relative to the pitch of the bottle blown. The first pitch (marked as middle C) should be the same pitch as the bottle, and the other pitches should be transposed relative to it. Performers may sing in higher registers if necessary (transposed by octave), but not below the fundamental of the bottle other than the whole step indicated in the melody. The player should lean in very close to the microphone, so that both the sound of the bottle and the voice are clearly picked up by the microphone and transformed. The player may lean closer and away from the microphone to aid in the dynamic effect. The marble rolls only require the player to rock the bottle briefly, starting the motion of the marble. The marble should be allowed to continue rocking until it comes to rest naturally, even if this is longer than the duration marked.

The rhythmic figure at 5:30 should be even and metric. It should begin quietly and become louder as the computer pitches are added above it. The performer should feel free to improvise widely on this figure, particularly once the computer loops are heard clearly. The player should line up the beat with the computer as closely as possible. The introduction of the bowl at 6:10 should mark the full culmination of this rhythmic figure. Feel free to be creative, deviating quite extensively with fills and ornaments, even freely improvising with the computer for short spans.

The transition into the figure at 7:20 should again be smooth and continuous from the previous section, matching roughly the same tempo. At 7:40, the roll on the bottom bottles should move from the butt to the near the neck, causing the marbles to rattle wildly at the height of the crescendo. This transition should be smooth. Often the marbles will begin to rattle significantly when hit even halfway down the body of the bottle. Move slowly from the butt in the early stages of the crescendo in order to gradually add the rattling sound to the roll, moving more quickly across the bottle as the middle of the bottle is reached.

The final gesture should occur precisely at 7:50. The subsequent pint glass figure should blend with the final sounds of the computer as it fades away.

Duration: 8:00

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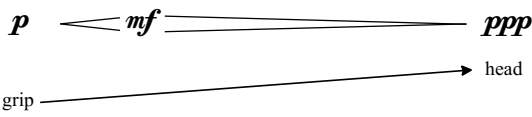
for pecussion and electronics

A. Vidiksis

Hold glass tightly in one hand. Tap with the wooden shaft of the mallet along the rim at roughly a 15 degree angle from the mouth of the glass. Move the glass from the bottom of the mallet near the grip toward the head, creating an overtone sweep upwards.

approx. 0:02

p — *mf* — *ppp*

head
grip

Med. yarn mallets

Slowly, solemn   freely

mf

Tap on glass rim as before. Move along the shaft from the grip to midway, then back toward the grip.

p — *mf* — *ppp*
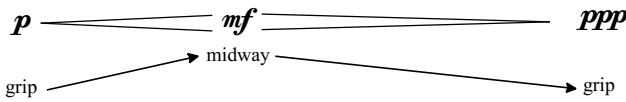
midway
grip   grip

as before   freely
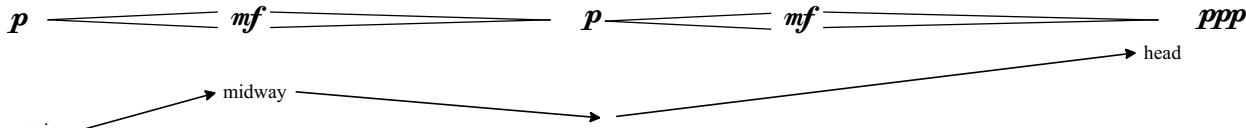
mf

again, as before   rit. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

mf

Move along the shaft from the grip to midway, back toward grip somewhat, then to head.

p — *mf* — *p* — *mf* — *ppp*

head
midway
grip

freely

p

approx. 0:50

Set glass down.   Roll on the rim of the glasses.

mp   *mf*

Hold the mallets pointing head upwards, gripped
near the head. Hit the glasses with the butt of the
shaft against the side of the glasses. (The bowl is
hit normally.)

mp

1:10

ff

On the butt of the wine bottle
with med. rubber mallets.

Play on the side of the glasses.

mp

1:19   *p*

mf

n

p   *mf*   *n*   *mf*

mf   *f*   *mp*

mp

mf   *mf*   3   *n*

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ADAM VIDIKSIS was born in 1979 in Staten Island, the least populated borough of New York City. His musical studies began on the piano at age four. As a child, he could frequently be found hitting nearly everything around him in order to experience the sound it would make: Adam soon discovered his love of creating new musical possibilities and his passion for all things percussion. As a young man, Adam developed a deep interest in science and technology, an enthusiasm that has profoundly influenced his work as a musician. He is very active as a performer, teacher, conductor, and composer, and is an enthusiastic advocate for new music. His work often explores sound, science, and the intersection of humankind with the machines we build.

For more music by Adam Vidiksis, please visit his website:
www.vidiksis.com