

LAN'GWĀG ANALYSIS

I began the electronic work entitled *Lan'gwāg* by having three voices in the recording studio read the following passage:

Sh!

From the Collins English Gem Dictionary reprinted in 1969:

Language- noun. The speech or tongue of a people, words used in a branch of learning, a style of speech or expression.

(Laugh)

From the Heinemann Australian Dictionary reprinted in 1991:

Language – noun.

The particular form of sounds or words used by a nation or group

The use of sounds or words to express thoughts or feelings to others

Any method of communication

The specific code of commands used to write a computer program

The science or study of sounds and words

The voices were a Scottish/Australian male, an American male, and an Australian female. These were recorded and used to create this piece using the computer program Protools. My message to be expressed through this piece was that language is subjective (depends on personal interests, emotions etc and displays individuality) and my aim was to portray the subtle differences in language (e.g. intonation, inflection and pronunciation in various accents). The basic structure of the work consists of three main sections, one for each of the performer's sounds to be focussed on, in the following order: Australian, Scottish, American. There are also numerous transitional sections (either between main sections or between smaller subsections within these main sections) where sounds produced from the speech of any or all the performers are employed (i.e. not necessarily created from the voice being focussed on in that section).

At the conclusion of the piece a minuscule section of the American's voice has been slowed down (at least 30 times slower), creating a drone similar in sound to an aeroplane landing (from this point on the sound will be referred to as the drone). I liked this sound so much that I decided to use it as the element of unification throughout the piece,

primarily in transitory sections to avoid continuous blocks of unrelated material. Since ending a piece with new material is somewhat off-putting, especially to a listener, the introduction of the sound early in the piece, and its continual reappearance, acts as a preventative for that unwanted occurrence.

A basic analysis of form is as follows:

SECTION 1 (focus on the Australian female voice): The piece begins with “Sh” looped, while a ‘blooper’ version of the original spoken text is played in the background. This fades out as the proper version fades in and the laugh is focussed upon and looped.

TRANSITION: As the laugh fades out tapping noises and the drone are layered on top of the proper original reading (which fades in and out throughout the subsection). As the subject “the specific code of commands” the word “particular” (omitting the initial ‘p’ attack) is repeated after and during “specific” (providing a synonym). Then all three voices (pitch shifted so that the registers are closer together and more easily confused) say “English” and “The speech or tongue of a people, words used in a branch of learning, a style of speech or expression”.

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 2: Added on to the end of this is the Scottish voice (which has been subjected to the short delay effect): “Any method of communication, the specific code of commands used to write a computer program, the science or study of sounds and words”, during which occurs snippets of all three saying “Australian”, the drone, and an underlying stretched version of the Scottish voice saying “Australian”. The drone continues as the three voices take turns to say points from the original text, while the Scottish voice overlaps in reversed speech. The American and Scottish voices then alternate (“ha ha ha ha...””) with the same material subjected to various effects, combined with the drone.

SECTION 2 (focus on Scottish male voice): This section actually begins towards the end of the male “ha ha ha” material, with the Scottish voice used to create a beat through the low loop (words reversed), which then is augmented by the addition

of “nine” (looped and pitch shifted higher than the natural voice) and an “ish” sound. Added finally on top of all is part of the original text “the science or study of sounds and words”. As this all fades out more of the initial passage is cited: “language-noun: a style of speech or expression, words used in a branch of learning, a style of speech or expression”. It is played backwards and followed immediately by the original text.

TRANSITION TO 2ND SUBSECTION OF SECTION 2: Superimposed onto end of this is the drone, which links it to all three voices reading momentarily (which fade out and we are again left with the drone).

SECTION 2 (SUBSECTION 2): As this drone fades out “ words to express” (Scottish) is looped (with slight delay), and added to with staggered entries of a ‘t’ sound (with long delay), the same sound that has been pitch shifted much lower until it resembles a grunt (in beat with the ‘words to express’ loop), and a ‘sss’ sound that is also in time with the pulse.

SECTION 3 (focus on American male voice): As this section fades out the American’s section begins with: “noun, 1) the particular form of sounds or words used by a nation or group” (fades out after “sounds or words”). “Sounds or words” is picked up on immediately and looped, gradually adding more and more differently pitch shifted copies and increasing in sound and tension until there is a moment of silence followed by “one” reversed (which creates a sound similar to a cat screeching). After this the drone enters, with little fragments of “po” to introduce the sound that is focussed on towards the end of the piece. As the drone fades “one two three four five” is repeated, with each repetition adding another voice (slightly out of phase) and adding an effect to another number. That is, on the first repetition “one” is reversed, (and these changes continue to occur in the following repetitions, i.e. the numbers do not again occur in their original form once they have been altered), and then the other numbers are varied slightly through the sound effects (such as delay). When all of the numbers have been changed the counting stops abruptly, but towards the end of this counting the linking drone again enters, linking this subsection with the following, which consists of a looped small sample and “po” repeated at various pitches a relatively slow, steady

pulse. At the same time 'to' is repeated, gradually increasing in speed (i.e. the interval between attacks is decreasing). As this sound fades out, the "po"s (in two voices) are repeated rapidly at different pitches, creating anticipation for the final drawn out drone, which consists of eight identical drones that are pitched within two octaves.

By the third and final section of this work I had been experimenting with new techniques, and becoming more familiar with the computer program. After final corrections and extensive working, however, I do not believe that the beginning of the composition is any less convincing than the conclusion. I am quite satisfied with this piece, and although I am continually learning more about Protools, and therefore composition in general, I feel that Lan'gwāg is an interesting piece that adequately performed its purposes (i.e. to communicate my message, fulfil my aims, and give me experience in technological