Chapter 7
Psytrance Influences on Touchless Interactive Experiences: New Roles for Performers and Audience within the Electronic Music Scenario

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ABSTRACT
In the fields of new media, art, and technology, we live and evolve together with multimedia interactive digital technology. This symbiosis has made it possible to develop novel works that dialogue with the exploratory nature of the human being when confronted with unfamiliar technological equipment. The electronic music scenario brought us some elements that inspired and provoked us in this quest. The Psytrance style in particular made us realize that once a minimal simple harmony was supported by a solid rhythm, the audience could interact and control many of the sound clusters available, solely with their body movement. In this chapter we report experimental results and analysis, which point towards an approach for composing electronic music through the distinct and innovative behaviour of the participants, turning them into real performers, as well as transforming the role of the DJ/VJ by engaging them in a two-way dialogue with their audience.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the viability of a novel interactive and collaborative electronic music form – one that can be attained by audience members strictly through their body movements and without any physical contact with an interface. The influence of contemporary electronic music in the development of such a system, particularly certain characteristics of psytrance, one of their sub-genres, is outlined. Initially, some aspects of electronic music particularly related to the evolution of instruments and music production software are described. We then report on our experiences in the conceptualization and design of an interactive instrument, and subsequently instigate a reinterpretation of the roles of both audience and DJ.

Our interactive system surpasses the typical linear narrative of popular music genres and catapults us into a non-linear narrative realm that offers multiple concurrent electronic textures and electroacoustic landscapes. Particular musical and behavioral elements are highlighted that offer a novel approach for music production and performance within such an interactive instrument. Reference is made to particular literature that contributes to the understanding of interactivity and immersion.

Finally, this work provokes questions and discussions in the interactive music research field. It applies not only in the field of contemporary electronic music, but in the fields of contemporary art and communication as well. Thus, this chapter relates a selected number of accounts and analysis of some of our works and experiments that lead us to consider them as promising systemic-based conceptualizations for interactive electronic music.

TOWARDS AN INTERACTIVE TOUCHLESS ELECTRONIC MUSIC SCENARIO

Interactivity is now at the forefront in the design of new instruments, immersive installations, and interactive dance experiments. Considering the popularity of devices such as the Kinect, Nintendo Wii game console and music-based games, such as Guitar Hero, Dance Dance Revolution, and Rockband, “the full use of one’s body in controlling an interactive experience is showing itself to be what people are looking for in their play experiences” (Giannachi, 2004).

Bearing this in mind, we directed our research in interactive environments with the aim of developing an organic sound ambiance that could be activated and influenced by the presence and movement of people. This lead to a more specific question: would it be possible to interactively co-compose electronic music works with a few members of the audience? The following scenario serves to illustrate the aforementioned features as well as support the accounts and discussion that follow in the chapter.
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