"IMAGINING COLOMBIA"

Culminating Experience Written Report

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Music Technology Innovation

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Introduction

Technology has become a very important part of our lives and together with the visual society we are living on many ideas, concepts and possibilities are been delivered to us every minute. In our early stages our brain is storing every piece of information that it presented to us complementing its own development[1], but the aggressive expansion and evolution of technology, and the many visual sources we have access to have changed the process of imagination and therefore creativity specially in Children. The time and space Children have to dedicate just to imagination is decreasing more and more every time. They can find images everywhere that will teach them how whatever they are imagining is.

I personally believe in the power of imagination as part of our development. Every building, every car and of course every piece of art has once been imagined and has passed through a process to become real; so no matter what a child decides to be on the future, their creativity skills must be well developed in order to put a plan in action.

I want to start creating spaces where technology is not an obstacle but a tool, where the magic of music and sounds activates their imagination and whatever they are imaging is right and can be real while we travel around together. I chose Colombia as the theme for this space, but in a future there are many places we can travel to keep

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[1] Graham, Judith. "Children and Brain Development: What We Know About How Children Learn."
The University of Maine. 2011. Accessed June 3, 2015. http://umaine.edu/publications/4356e/.

imagining. Together with imagination, they will be also learning about that place they are discovering so they start understanding the multiculturalism of the world.

Description

Imagining Colombia is an interactive performance in the form of a story tale that recreates the Pacific Region in Colombia with the help of sound design, music and technology. Putting together the perfect elements Children will be able to imagine smells, sensations and the entire environment while learning specific facts of that part of the Colombian culture.

In order to set the mood, sounds will be placed along the timeline of the story with songs for Children about rhythms, musical instruments and nature. "Mi currulao" is an original Children's song that talks about the regional music genre Currulao[2]. "Chontaduro maduro" is a Children's song that I arranged to fit my purposes; it talks about a fruit for the pacific Region that is part of our tradition. They will interact with the story using technology devices, in this case Wii controllers, to place and experience closely the journey.

I will be using a quad system to make it as real as possible, the mix will be balanced in the four speakers according to the environment we are on; panning is a key tool to play with the space where sounds come from, the sea in the front, rain sounds everywhere, voices distributed around, etc. With the help of lights the mood will be

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[2] Birenbaum Quintero, Michael. "LAMECA - Afro-Colombian Music - 3. Currulao, the Marimba Dance." LAMECA. June 1, 2009. Accessed June 2, 2015.
http://www.lameca.org/dossiers/afro_colombian_music/eng/p3.htm.

more complex to make the experience of imagination more realistic.

Innovative Aspects

In general, I want the entire experience to be new and unique. Even though there might be performances for Children alike I want to use technology as one of my tools to make it different. The use of technology has been mistaken many times, sometimes turning into an addiction, or in the case of Children, as an excuse for parents to keep them entertain, but it is not a bad tool if we find new ways to use it and to deliver it to Children so that they can appreciate the use of it.

Wii controllers are a tool that will let Children have a direct interaction with the story, the sounds and the environment. I synched four Wii controllers through the OSCulator and gave specific tasks to the buttons that will fit in the mood of the story, separated between the jungle and the city, sounds and light responses will emerge with their interaction.

Lights controlled directly from Ableton in the form of MIDI information will be adapted to respond together with sounds, such as thunder and lightning, so that when a sounds comes out it is linked together with a change in the lights. This is possible through the DMXIS light interface designed specifically for live performers that facilitates the control of the lights in the same software environments as sound and music.

All of these elements will enhance the reality of my purpose, to travel through imagination to new spaces around the world or the universe.

New Skills Acquired

Technology Skills

The first and most important skill for me is the use of *Ableton*, I had experience in Pro tools, Logic and Reason but I had never use Ableton for any purposes. Through this year I learned the basics of it, quantization, recording, mapping, mixing, sound design, etc. Imagining Colombia is going to be controlled with Ableton, and I have used it to mix, to record and organize the stems depending on the scenes I want for the story. I also mapped midi controllers to ease the flow of the performance and trigger scenes and sounds.

An extra skill linked with Ableton was to be able to find a way to make the *quad system* work with the DAW since it does not have a specific task that for it. I arrange the session through sends and I have been working on it, also, I found a max patch that makes the surround system or quad control easier that I will explore deeper later if I have any trouble with my session. After having it settled, I started the process of *mixing* which was also new for me since the perception of space is different in this environment.

I decided to incorporate the *light experience* to my performance; that meant I had to learn how to connect the light's software with Ableton, also I had to atomize the

response form the light to link it with sound. I found a light interface, DMXIS, which allows me to control that response in the form of MIDI.

Performance Skills

I have performance experience as a singer; with in this performance the dynamic is totally different. I have to get into the story, recreate a character and also sing, while trying to keep Children's attention on. At the same time, I also have to be aware of the technology side of my performance including all the new skills I have learned and keep the old one running smooth and be ready for any problem that might emerge.

And finally, I have learned how to set up a performance that at the same time can be considered an installation, from finding the right space, consider the right time, arrange the space to help with the environment, find my audience and putting everything together to be successful.

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Challenges

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Anticipated

Since I started including technology with my experience of music I have realized the risk that it implies. With no reason devices might stop working, DAW might fail, or any other situation related to it that I have to be aware of and ready to solve. Through the process I experienced it many times and I have had the time to solve them, but the real challenge is being ready to solve any problem that emerges while I am

performing.

I have a team that is going to help me, but I have to do my part, I have to know how to react without letting the audience know about it, improvise, and keep the mood up no matter what. Children's attention is easy to lose and I am aware of it. Of course also, I have check every detail of the technology I am using so that the risk in having further problems through my performance is lower.

As I was mentioning, Children's attention is easy to lose, and one of the challenges I have know since the beginning is the issue with it. It is not just easy to lose, but also hard to capture. Through the process I have always keep that on the top of my concerns and I always tried to find ideas that will keep the attention during the entire performance.

Unexpected

The challenges that have emerged in the process of the making of the performance are related with the anticipated issue of technology. When I decided to use lights, I risked my self in adding another piece of technology to keep an eye on. I bought a completely new device and learned from scratch, even though it is not very complex software I spent some hour trying to make it work in the trustiest way. I solved it, but at a point I thought it was not going to work in a friendly way and that it was going to make harder the process of controlling everything at the same time.

Also, since I am connecting the light interface, the sound interface and the controller I

have had issues with the efficiency of my computer; I have had some synching problems because of that. I am now using two computers so the risk of having any problem is lower, the soundscape and the songs' stems run through one computer, and the lights and responses connected with the Wii controllers are going to be controller from the second computer.

Future Ramifications and/or Plans

We want to go further with the performance, opening it for any subject that teach Children something and that can make them imagine new worlds they have never been into. Starting from different regions in Colombia, different countries, to fantastic worlds with castles, spaceships and new creatures.

My fellowship proposal was to continue developing my project and integrating other students' experience in it. In Berklee we have a variety of cultures to rely on, so I want it to use it in favor of the project and of Children. My proposal was directly connected with the Children of Valencia and together with the my team, we have found Chiquiemprendedores, and entrepreneurial program for Children that runs in Valencia, so we will work with their data base to start getting recognition in the community.

Also, we want to present the project to the consulate of Colombia in Valencia and look for an opportunity to have their support and expand not just in Valencia, but also in different cities of Spain.

We will keep searching for venues, and new contacts that will help us spread the voice and find more and more families interested in attend to our performances.

As a complement for my performance, we want to create the first Children's Music Festival in Colombia to create spaces for Colombian Children and to give the opportunity to new Children's artists that want to perform. Imagining Colombia is the ideal model of performance we would like to have in the Festival. Deliver a message using technology in an innovative way.

Meanwhile and in order to gain more experience with Children, I am trying to set some performances in Cali, Colombia, where I was born, in august, so that the idea is well rehearsed and that will made me feel more confortable in front of my audience.

Business plan

Conclusion

I have always been interested in Children as my audience, either if my product is delivered in the form of a recording or a live performance. With this experience I have confirmed my beliefs about the need of attention in the Children's Music Industry. It is not an easy audience and there are more aspects to have in consideration that in the general Music Industry. Children are open to learn, to experience, but I need to have the right tools to make their experience educational in every aspect. The use of technology showed me that there is a way to use it as my ally and Children love it. I am sure that reactivating Children imagination their perspective of the environment is going to change. And of course, without directly thinking about

it, I am showing a problem to parents that the can easily solve at home.

As part of the educational experience I wanted to complement the content by delivering cultural information about my country that can be adapted to any other region of the world. Culture is a very important fact to have in mind and to teach Children. To showed them that there is a world outside so different to what they are used to, and that getting to know those places can be fun, can become an adventure and they are starting to develop skills about understanding and respecting what is different.

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