

Kenrick Ho

Cloud Iridescence

For Solo Piano and Live Electronics

(2018)

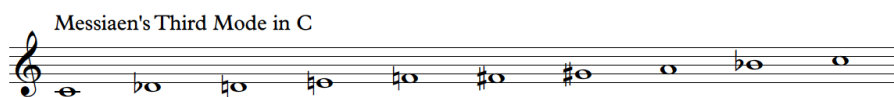
Preface:

The motivation behind this piece comes from a very ambitious crossover between my postgraduate composition portfolio and the Digital Musician assignment. The requirement that I aim to fulfil from my technical portfolio is to only use Messiaen's Third Mode throughout the piece, and for my Digital Musician project, I must play a live instrument and use Ableton software on a computer for the performance.

The electronic part in this piece is ambient in nature, and the piano part is highly improvisatory. Apart from the Messiaen Mode used, this project is unconventional and exciting in many other ways, i.e. the extended use of rare percussive piano sounds, the use of looper, the performance set up, and strumming inside the piano. More about performance instructions and equipment requirements are on the next page.

General Remarks:

1. For practical reasons, the score is written in a form similar to a script. The time cues are approximate, and are only based on the first performance of the piece.
2. Even though it is expected that the players improvise on this score, and is free to make any spontaneous actions at will. However, it is very important that the entire piece only use pitch material from Messiaen's third mode, in the following transposition:



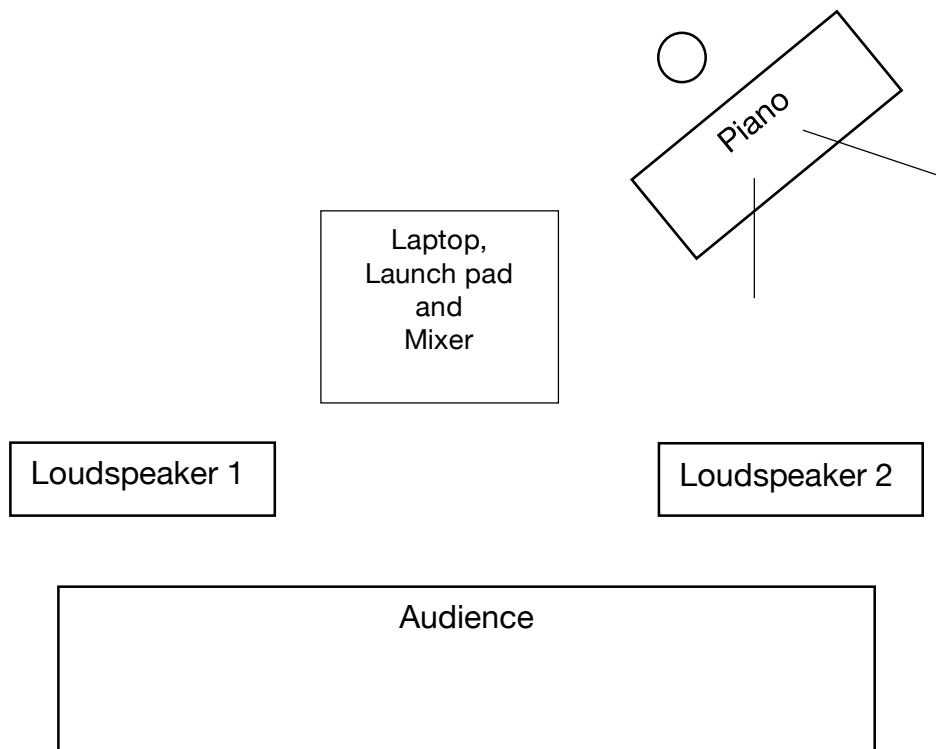
3. Despite the instructions below are directed for Ableton users, players are welcome to use any DAW or other software if preferred.

(Duration: ca. 4')

Technical requirements:

1. 1x Piano (preferably upright)
2. 1x Laptop with Ableton
3. 2x Microphones for stereo set up
4. 2x Loudspeakers for stereo set up
5. 1x Mixer (with
6. 1x Launch pad (AKAI APC Mini was used in the performance)
7. 1x table for placing laptop and launch pad next to the piano

Stage Plan:



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A: 0'00" ~ 0'40"

- With a 2-bar looper on ableton, create 5 - 7 layers of free percussive rhythm by hitting the exterior of the piano. i.e. knocking on the hollow wood near the foot pedal, opening and closing the lid, scratching the sides, or rumbling lighting on the keys.
- The results should be rhythmically interesting, and forming a rich percussive texture.

B: 0'40 ~ 1'40"

Improvise on this chord:



- Start slowly, and only use 1-2 notes in the beginning.
- Gradually introduce the pitches one by one, and explore sonorities of this chord.
- Once all four notes have been introduced, start a clip on ableton with this chord.
- The mood should be free and ambient.

C: 1'40" ~ 2'40"

- Gradually use more notes of the mode, but try to avoid playing F major triads. (the F major 7 chord near the end will sound like a surprise).
- Slowly improvise towards the top register, and play a high pitched ambient clips on Ableton.
- Eventually expand on the range and dynamic of improvisation
- Ideally the improvisation should not be too over-powering when juxtaposing with the electronic clips.
- It is also advised to turn down percussion loop from A slightly.
- The ambient mood should still be present
- At around 2'40", suddenly stop all clips, and stop playing.

D: 2'40" ~ 4'00

- After the sudden pause, play another set of ambient clips on Ableton. These clips should focus more on the lower register, and should feel darker
- The drum loop from A can continue in a low volume
- The Improvisation here may include touching the interior of the piano, as a reverse reaction to knocking the exterior in the opening. i.e. strum strings inside of the piano, knock from inside, or make noise with the pedal.
- Eventually this should build up on to a climax, where there should be a bright and brassy F major 7 chord from Ableton, and it should feel like a shrine of light through the Clouds.
- Shortly after the F major 7 chord, gradually slide down the faders on the launch pad, and reduce the activity level on the piano as well, until silence, and finish.