

Netværk  
Interactive Composition for Four Composers and Four Computers (60')

composed and performed by

Wayne Siegel  
Ivar Frounberg  
Svend Aaquist Johansen  
& Fuzzy  
1989-93

Program Notes

"Netværk" is a live computer music project involving four composers and four computers. Each of the four composers has defined a movement, and the four movements comprise the work. Though our music is stylistically different, we have all written music in many genres. The idea of Netværk was not to change the way we wrote music, but rather to use the computer as a tool which could enable us to compose music in a live concert situation. When a composer writes a piece of music to be performed by other musicians he or she is forced to write down a specific case of an idea, even though the idea might be realized in many different forms with equal success depending on the situation. A composition is often built around a general structure or process which comprises the idea of the work. This aspect was left unchanged in our composition, but since all three "performers" were also composers, we found it natural that certain decisions about structural details should be made during the performance itself. Our goal was not to create a general-purpose environment for real-time composition but rather four highly specialized programs with specific functions and controls. Each program was an integrated part of a composition and each composer defined the structure of his movement and decided exactly what roles the computers and performers would play.

In Svend Aaquist Johansen's movement, the performers manipulate the parameters of a limited number of underlying musical structures, the backbone being an infinity row generated by each computer. In Ivar Frounberg's movement the composer has defined seven aggregates consisting of twelve pitches each, along with an order in which these aggregates occur. The performer chooses metric durations and subdivisions to create rhythmic structures. Wayne Siegel's movement is a strict 12-voice canon. Each performer creates melody lines within 26 different modes defined by the composer. The computer generates three other voices precisely synchronized and distributed spatially. In Fuzzy's movement, the composer performs on a MIDI wind instrument. The output of this instrument is sent to three computers and altered by the three other composers.

What we have found attractive and have attempted to investigate in the Netværk project was having certain elements of a work fixed while other elements have varying degrees of openness. The way in which these elements were combined became an integral part of the composition, while the computers enable us to create complex musical details using simple manual gestures, allowing us to retain some of the spontaneity of improvisation and the control of composition.