

Prof. V.J. Manzo

Alternative Instruments for Music Education

Kean University, Montclair State University, Temple University
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e-mail: vj@vjmanzo.com

websites: www.vincemanzo.com | www.eamir.org

Conference Precedings

Introduction

Imagine a room where music is produced by touching the wall or the floor. Imagine a room where physical gestures that you've used since birth are mapped to notes and harmony. Imagine a room with new musical instruments designed to let individuals without any formal music training create and perform meaningful music.

EAMIR (Electro-Acoustic Musically Interactive Room) is an interactive music system that allows students and individuals with mild and profound disabilities to create a unique, tonal musical expression without the physical and technical limitations found in the performance of traditional acoustic instruments. EAMIR instruments are unmodified alternate controllers and sensors that connect with original software designed to allow these individuals to create music by using physical gestures that individuals are familiar with. The EAMIR instruments are accessible interfaces such that can be played by stepping on a foam floor tile, touching an LCD screen, waving a hand in the air. Each of these gestures produces a meaningful series of musical events or sounds that can be mapped to a single 7-note mode.

The software is limitlessly customizable and can be used to produce pitches melodically or harmonically. Teachers specify the tonic and mode and can easily perform with students that would otherwise have great difficulty performing and composing. In 2007, the first Electro-acoustic Musically Interactive Room was proposed and created by Vincent Joseph Manzo.

In order to make EAMIR more accessible, all of the commercial controllers/interfaces are unmodified, making EAMIR primarily a software project. This allows the end-user to obtain any controller/interface associated with an EAMIR software title and simply plug it in and begin making music on any Windows or Macintosh computer. This software is freely available from <http://www.eamir.org>, EAMIR's website which also provides information regarding setup, installation, and use as well as where to purchase controllers and sensors. The source code is also available upon request allowing users to easily adapt the software for their personal needs.