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Music 256A

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Reading Response to *Chapter 5 and Interlude*

From this week's reading, I would like to respond to Artful Design Principle 5.2 and 5.4:

*Principle 5.2: There is an aesthetic to interaction*

*Principle 5.4: Bodies matter!*

Principle 5.2 describes the object that individuals interact as extension of themselves. It states that instrument design must simultaneously possess simplicity of interaction and potential for complex output. Principle 5.4 emphasizes the significance of tangible interaction with the human body. It defines the body as the human mind's interface to the outside world, and argues that artful design should take full advantage of it.

Aside from creating software for performing electronic music in real time, I enjoy building hardware MIDI controllers. When I was learning to do so from Mr. Roger Linn (the creator of Linn Drums, Linnstrument, etc.), he mentioned his personal belief that became my favorite quote: "A great instrument must be a device that provides the same interface to beginners and professionals, and allows them to demonstrate their skills distinctively. A great instrument grows with a performer". I have followed this principle whenever I have designed an instrument for myself and others. In my opinion, it is tempting to create a device that outputs appealing content independently of the user's input. For example, I recently encountered a virtual reality piece where melodies are generated based on the user's interaction with controllers. While the experience was undoubtedly beautiful, the software's ability to constantly generate great sounding music regardless of my actions diminished the sense of direct interaction. My never-ending goal in instrument design is to offer as much flexibility as I can to the users while providing guidance and a structure that allow them to compose and perform music in a new way.

Principle 5.4 reminded me of the time I interviewed Games of Berkeley, a board game store located next to UCB. I asked customers and employees why the store has continued to thrive for four decades despite the popular trend of video games. Many of my interviewees responded that board games are designed specifically to bring people together by encouraging them to physically interact with the game objects. They mentioned that playing a game does not only consist of winning or losing, but that it promotes human interaction by having an in-person conversation. I believe that the same logic can be applied to music making, which is recently done more often on a laptop without a physical interface. Great music derives from communication between musicians as well as tangible interaction with instruments using the human body. I hope to create interfaces that promote such activities.