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<u>**Reading Response 3**</u>

Please write 250-500 words responding to Chapter 5 + Interlude from *Artful Design* using the following prompt:

"Reflect on the role of the computer as it relates to music-making for you; what makes certain uses of the computer better than others? Articulate an argument, and support with evidence."

The role of the computer as it relates to music-making for me is quite simple. The computer is an apparatus that allows me to explore forms of musical expression that cannot be produced by any other means. This notion originates from Ge's frequent broadcasts of "Create something that would not be possible without the computer."

Musical expression includes controls, sounds, instrumentation, human interaction, gestures, performance, etc. The great thing about the computer is the ability it possesses to manipulate, control, and fine-tune these forms of musical expression. Notably, through the computer, the re-mutualizing of input, output, and human interaction can be specified to one's desires and practicality.

For example, Perry Cook's coffee mug reveals a more careful approach to design for human use and practicality than expected. An aspect of the input – the coffee mug itself and its four force-sensing resistors – reveals the sensible nature to playing the instrument, which is to hold the mug by placing your thumb through the handle and utilize your four fingers to control the FSRs. The playing design of the coffee mug resembles that of a trumpet, another practical design for human use. Also, the ability to map output sounds to a specific FSR allows for further control, knowing that the designations of sounds can easily be manipulated through code. Lastly, the possibility to transform an everyday artifact into an instrument that allows for human-computer interaction displays the endless potential for creativity and music making even from the simple and unexpected. Another example that characterizes the potential to transform a simple household object into a masterful device is the Ikea salad bowl!

I referred to these specific examples because they illustrate the extent to which one can utilize the computer to explore musical territories that cannot be explored otherwise. The computer provides you with artistic authority and delicate tools to stretch the norms of music – to take a musical recipe, tear it apart, and rearticulate it in a completely adventitious manner. The tools at disposal are continuously developing and that means continuous musical innovation is under way.

Another aesthetic element I never considered before is that the artist can vary the amount of human interaction implemented within their work (Should the bulk of the piece be self-generated by the computer? Should the piece incorporate more human involvement and presence?) As a cellist, I have had my share doubts of whether computer music would be able to reach the audience in a way that live instrumental performance does – through the spontaneity of performance decisions, expressive note-to-note transitions, and performer response to the music (through facial expressions & gestures). However, I have come to realize that the purpose of computer music is not to mirror live instrumental performance. The purpose of computer music is to convey music in ways beyond the scope of instrumental music, to reach out to audiences based on its own merit.