



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

Case Study Proposal

Obsessed Again...

Focus 1 - Arts

Keith Hamel

The University of British Columbia

November 2002

Description of the Case Study Subject

Obsessed Again... is a work for bassoon and interactive electronics written in 1992 by Canadian composer Keith Hamel. The work uses a version of the MAX interactive music software along with a commercial synthesizer and a pitch-to-midi converter. Although the composition was designed to use commercial hardware and software, the equipment required is quickly becoming obsolete, and the computer files are incompatible with current operating systems. The work has not been performed for several years, but the commissioner (Jesse Read) has expressed the desire to have the work in his repertoire in a form that can be performed easily using current technology (both hardware and software). In order to meet this requirement, the composition will require recovery and a substantial reworking of both the interactive and electronic elements. In addition, strategies for migrating the piece to future hardware and software will need to be investigated so that the current scenario does not repeat itself. The study will focus on the task of reconstituting *Obsessed Again...*, and will be particularly concerned with:

- identifying the documents associated with the musical work, both digital and non-digital,
- articulating the requirements for musical authenticity based upon those documents,
- building a performable, authentic, realization of the work,
- developing a method for the future storage, retrieval, migration, and access of the work.

Rationale

Building a record of *Obsessed Again...* and the necessary management of this record clearly fall within the InterPARES 2 Project domain(s). The study subject is artistic, involving a musical composition which combines a traditional instrument with electronic sounds. This composition is both interactive and experiential, as the electronic sounds are rendered in real-time based upon input from the performer. As the original technologies used to create and perform the piece's digital elements are now obsolete, it will be necessary to address the inadequacies of its current mode of preservation and suggest a more successful model for future archiving. This case study will address research questions from all three domains.

Methodologies

Interviews with the composer and performer will be the primary research activities. However, while developing the interview questions the team will investigate literature addressing the concept of musical authenticity. Archival research into data storage methods will also be required. Information gathered will be used to model the process necessary to achieve an authentic performance of *Obsessed Again....* While constructing this model, the team will evaluate possible strategies for its storage. The performance model will then be executed, during which the piece's digital elements will be updated as necessary. By attempting a practical implementation of the model, the team expects to achieve considerable insight into the model's accuracy, as well as providing the opportunity of developing and testing a preservation strategy. The composer (Keith Hamel) has several other interactive works with similar designs, and these works can also be used as tests for the portability and extensibility of the preservation strategy.

Research Team

Lead Investigator: Dr. Keith Hamel, University of British Columbia, School of Music

Co-investigator(s): Additional Researcher (preferably an archivist)

Research Assistant

Timeline

January 2003:	research musical authenticity, develop interview questions
February 2003:	conduct interviews of composer (Keith Hamel) and performer (Jesse Read)
Spring 2003:	examine data and construct process model, develop preservation strategies
Summer 2003:	implement process model, culminating in a concert performance (will involve costs: approx \$2 000 for (digital audio interface and software)
Fall 2003:	prepare the final report