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Oliveros Bot write-up

AI language models do not capture the essence of a person's writing style. Rather, they disregard context and recreate quirks that are measurable by a machine. Pauline Oliveros often performed in unusual spaces - spaces that were intended to make the performer be more thoughtful and deliberate with the sounds they created. The performer was required to listen closely to what they created and its reverberations and allow it to inform what they created next. Without the context of the intention behind the performance space, one might come to the conclusion that Pauline Oliveros chooses performance spaces that are unusual.

Oliveros Bot was performed on an unfinished bridge in the woods near Santa Cruz, California. It offered no unusual acoustic effects to the audio that was created, but it was an incomplete mixture of human intention and the physical phenomenon of water, much like the abandoned underground cistern where Oliveros' famous work, Deep Listening, was recorded. Stripped of the intention and meaning behind location selection, Patrick Stephenson and I set out to record the most performable and interesting pieces that the algorithm generated.

We brought
- A small lamp from Ikea
- A Dell G7 15 model laptop
- A folding table
- A Fender Rustler banjo
- A cloth mat
- A Zoom H4N audio recorder
- A 1960s starlight condenser microphone
- A microphone
- A Lumix GH4 digital camera
- An iPhone 8 plus
- An iPad
- A portable battery pack

We recorded the audio through both the camera and a small audio recorder, and I used different sources for different parts of the final video.

The first piece, For A Large Group, Either In or Out Of The City, was only performed by me. The instructions called for dialing a series of telephone numbers into a phone. I did not prepare much for most of these pieces, and was not expecting to have a collaborator on the other end of the line for this one.

Rhyme Rhea - Libra Mater gives instructions in the first line, which are nearly impossible to perform. It then continues to give the reader a mixture of description, interpretation, and further instructions. It uses a jumble of words that feel abstract but meaningful. Individual phrases, like temporal bones, take on new meaning in the context of the abstract jumble of ideas. The human inclination to create meaning out of chaos gives the reader a sense of beauty and importance that was not intended by the creator.

For an Laptop was performed by both Patrick and myself. You can start to see our two different approaches to interpretation in this piece. Patrick was interested in getting at the

meaning behind the pieces, as though they were crafted by an entity with purpose. You can see this in his attempt to 'make a sound like a rock' *to* the laptop. He also chose to improvise instruments out of small rocks, which were collected near the performance space. Patrick's performance involved tiny bits of dirt falling onto the banjo, creating an interesting crackling sound on the closer mic. My performance was more whimsical and literal, as most of my performances are in Oliveros Bot. I took a portion of the song "Like A Rock" by Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band where Bob Seger sings the phrase "like a rock" and set it to loop on Ableton Live, utilizing the warp feature to make it slightly stuttered. I took the title of the piece, For an Laptop, and the line "make a sound like a rock," as well as a later instruction "follow the outline of a tone written on the screen" and inferred that I should have the waveform open on the screen and concentrate on it. The piece was completed with me using pieces of wood to improvise a microphone, and use them as instruments

The fourth piece was not titled by the language modeling software, and so I titled it At that moment (bird house), as it began with the phrase "At that moment," and the phrase "bird house" was the most memorable part for me. It reads like a poetic surreal short story, interjected with occasional commands and descriptions that somewhat fit the narrative. Again, the unintentional meaning that can be gleaned from this strange nonsense can feel profound.

ROCK PIECE was the only piece that I felt like I should have prepared for. What you are seeing is my first take, as well as Patrick's, superimposed on each other. The most important instructions seem to be these: perform one hundred sounds in one minute, each sound should be unique, and the piece should last only as long as a breath. I set a timer and began with a shout as "the loudest sound that can be made" and attempted to create as many unique sounds in one minute as I could, without taking a breath. I was unsuccessful in following the instructions. Perhaps the 'music' created must come with the experience of failing the instructions.

The final performed piece, BASSICIT, is almost a parody of Oliveros's work. She was concerned with the breath, but not so much as to have every third or fourth word in her instructions be 'breath.' Patrick's approach, again, was to get at the meaning behind the instructions. He treated his breath as the instrument, and attempted to manipulate it in the way the instructions requested. I took the final line - "Repeat until the end of the instrument" - literally, and attempted to breathe along the 'length' of the banjo that I had brought.

One Hundred Years was not explicitly performed by Patrick or I in the video presentation. It's a piece that seems to talk about the cyclic nature of humanity and life, and is open to interpretation.

I was interested in investigating a few different ideas in this piece. Authorship, of course, is often on people's minds when discussing AI generated works. Am I the author of these pieces? Is the GPT-2 training model the author? Is Pauline Oliveros, who will never get the chance to even see these? I did take part in curating and selecting them, but they are not mine.

The ethical implications of this piece are interesting as well, which is why I haven't released it in any sense yet. The video has a voice speaking, which is almost, but not quite, like how Pauline Oliveros spoke at a certain time of her life. The words have elements of her writing in them, but are not what she would have written. Did I create a fascinating memorial that

honors her work, or a horrible zombie project that disrespects her and those that care about her?

The relationship between technology and artist is usually about how an artist can manipulate technology to get closer to their desired vision, but Oliveros Bot is more about the 'vision' of the technology being generated by human performers. Can an algorithm have a vision? And if so, is there a right interpretation and a wrong one? Can this be said about human instructions as well?