

# Introduction to Jean-Luc Lamarque

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When I showed *Pianographique* to my friend Cliff Syringe, it blew his mind. *Pianographique* makes musicians wet themselves. Cliff is an electric bass player, vocalist, and painter. Lamarque also combines his musical interests with being a painter. Cliff's gold tooth gleamed and he hunkered down into playing it with the fascination that musicians reserve for instruments.

*Pianographique* is Jean-Luc Lamarque's widely celebrated and enjoyed online interactive visual music instrument that you play with the keyboard (and sometimes the mouse also). You don't have to be a musician to play it, but it helps. I suspect that *Pianographique* is particularly attractive to musicians.

There is variety in *Pianographique* along several axes. Different modules, some of which are pictured on the left, have different keyboard controls, though they all use the letters on the keyboard for the main action. For instance, the "Krsh\_Neige" module allows use of the arrow keys and the numeric pad, whereas most of the other modules don't. These are for zoom in/out and color changing.

Some sounds continue and others play just once. So you can set up a backbeat or a background sound and then improvise with the sounds that don't repeat, and then change background sounds. Also, the keyboard response time is good, as we need it to be.

Also, there is variety in the modules themselves. Not only musical variety. Some modules are devoted to the spoken word, others are musical, others are not so much 'musical' as experimental sound or atmospheric sound.

*Pianographique* is among a handful of notable interactive audio works on the Web, at the moment, that combine the visual and the sonic with interesting compositional possibilities. Many of these works are either interesting as works of art or interesting as instruments but not both. Though Lamarque is quite humble about his creation, *Pianographique*, it seems to me, is interesting both as a tool or instrument and as a work of art. It seems that there is indeed a tension between the idea of a tool or instrument and the idea of a work of art. Intriguing works do not so much 'resolve' this tension as play on it productively.

Lamarque could easily make the modules capable of much more sonic diversity, for instance, make them more complex to use as instruments, give them far greater

musical range, but he hasn't (yet, anyway). That would detract, unless done carefully, from the thing as a work of art approachable by more or less anybody not so much as only an instrument but a vision/audition of the direction of visual music on and offline.

Note that the sound is the foreground in this piece. It's visual also, but the sound is the foreground. It is more a musical instrument than a visual instrument, though of course it is both. The sound programming is also a bit more developed than the visual programming, perhaps. The synchronization of the sound is not too bad, though simple, perhaps necessarily, since you play it like an instrument, and the synchronization depends on you—as well as the tempo of the recordings themselves.

Most of the graphics are static, though in the "Sudden Stories" collaboration with Clauss and Birgé we are starting to see animations. Of course it is possible to synch the visuals and the sound, but this is not part of *Pianographique* yet, though who knows what Lamarque will add in the future. The "pianoscripiter" he mentions in the interview sounds interesting. It will save configuration information, I surmise, not the actual sounds, to the harddrive.

The interview, below, with Lamarque indicates someone who has a rather humble perspective on his creation, which has been widely celebrated. This is charming and unusual. He does not regard it so much as a work of art as "an open work", ie, presumably something open-ended to art and development as an instrument. It's this open-endedness that he carefully fosters in the work. And you can tell that he is very interested in what other people do with *Pianographique*—that is his focus, making it both interesting in itself but mostly a creative tool for others. He takes the 'instrumentality' of *Pianographique* very seriously and I expect we will see it develop fruitfully beyond its current state, which already is somewhat noteworthy.

It will be interesting to see if these developments make it any more interesting as a work of art or instrument or both or something else.

"When i created the pianographie in 1992, i was very influenced by Dada, surrealists, collage techniques and experimental movie makers like Oscar Fischinger who worked on the synsthetic relation of sound and image. "

Jean-Luc Lamarque



Pianographie



SuddensStories



Little Chicken