

Ergodic Musicking

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the concept of ergodic musicking, defined as a form of ergodic effort (Aarseth, 1997; Aarseth & Calleja, 2015) in which the non-trivial act of traversing a cybermedium involves degrees of musicking. At the same time, ergodic musicking is also considered as a form of musicking (Small, 1998), in which participation in a musical performance involves the exertion of ergodic efforts.

Ergodic effort is regarded as the nontrivial effort required by the users of cybermedia (such as digital games), intended as objects that can be traversed and reconfigured (Aarseth, 1997; Aarseth & Calleja, 2015). Musicking is defined by Small as “[taking] part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (composing), or by dancing” (1998, p. 9). According to Small, “music is not a thing at all, but rather an activity” (1998, p. 2). As such, it should be understood as a verb: “to music”.

While engaging with digital games, users music in a variety of ways; for example, Miller (2009; 2012, p. 15) writes about the schizophonic performances made possible by the popular games *Guitar Hero* (Harmonix, 2005) and *Rock Band* (Harmonix, 2007). Ergodic musicking, however, is not simply a remediation of existing musical roles; rather, it is a unique, modern form of musicking. From ostensibly musical digital games, to examples that do not mimic known musical situations, ergodic musicking is understood as the quintessential modality of musical participation in digital games.

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