

PRESS RELEASE

THE JPMORGANCHASE KIDS DIGITAL MOVEMENT AND SOUND PROJECT

(a collaborative project of mak.frankfurt, Ballet Frankfurt,
Teachers College and the Computer Music Center of Columbia University)
www.music.columbia.edu/kids

PRESENTS

**An evening of works in progress
created by children from the USA and Germany
at the 3rd World Summit on Media for Children**

*March 25th 2001, at 7:30pm
Pavillion 10 HELEXPO
Thessaloniki, Greece*

Project and performance summary

Children use the latest digital technologies to analyze their movements and sounds of their environments. They use the knowledge gained from this analysis to produce their own choreographies for children and LEGO Mindstorms robots and their own music compositions.

During the 3rd World Summit on Media for Children (March 23-26 in Thessaloniki Greece; www.3rd-ws.org) the project will present a concert of works in progress created by children in the USA and Germany. The concert will take place at Pavilion 10 of Helexpo at 7:30 pm on Sunday March 25th. It will be followed by a reception/dinner for summit participants hosted by JPMorganChase. The full program of the event is attached.

Images

Images from the workshops of the project can be downloaded from the web-site of the project: www.music.columbia.edu/kids

Project concept and description

The two basic ideas behind this project are that a) our intelligence and creativity come not only from our mastery of logic, but also from the physical and emotional interactions we have with the world and with each other and that b) our future will involve ever more complex interactions between software and people.

The project aims to prepare our children to face this rapidly changing, complex world that will demand highly developed perceptual and communicative abilities. Through the powerful tools of sound and movement children explore complex physical, social and mathematical relationships. The balanced training of their senses (kinesthesis, sound perception, logic) allows children to achieve a concurrent and interdependent growth of

emotion and intellect. The project takes advantage of the latest digital technologies to allow children to study sound and movement through direct exploration rather than through stylized techniques and methods that might distance them from the experience.

For example, in the movement project, we do not instruct children in ballet techniques, but we rather encourage them to explore the quality and nature of the full range of ordinary movements (walking, running, turning, jumping), and we then let them invent new movements of their own. Following that, the children explore the translation of these movements into LOGO procedures - operations that can be performed by the LEGO Mindstorms building system. The children then construct Mindstorms robots that combine these movements into sequences, exploiting the system's unique use of sensors to allow the robots to respond to touch, light, heat, and movement. Finally children and robots dancers participate in dance expositions.

In the sound project we do not teach children how to read or write standard music scores. We start the project by having children digitally record and study the sounds of their environment and their own voices. They then use the knowledge gained from this study to synthesise their own digital compositions. The children employ user-friendly tools geared to their developmental levels, but in a highly sophisticated context - a distributed or ubiquitous computing environment in which machine intelligence is not restricted to a fixed CPU and monitor, but is instead deployed in mobile formations throughout the learning environment. A large part of the control of the digital synthesis is achieved through external controllers that offer children a direct physical relationship to the elements of sound. The children work in teams and create the compositions collectively. The script (form) of the resulting compositions evolves from the soundscapes that the children experience and analyse. The children are encouraged to listen to the interaction of the sound elements of each soundscape and to incorporate this interactivity in their group compositions. In such an environment, children see that organisation can arise as a consequence of emergent structure (the unanticipated interaction of numerous interdependent elements) rather than from top-down design.