

Audacity Project— “Magnetic Poetry” (*musique concrète*)

Record a favorite poem in Audacity, then create a sound composition from your recording. The only audio source will be your voice, reciting the poem you have chosen. For this project, we will approximate the techniques and aesthetics of *musique concrète*, limiting ourselves roughly to the kinds of things that could be done with a multi-track tape machine in the 1950s.

Steps

1. Write a compositional plan (use the template) before you begin. This will change as you work. Your final result may not resemble your plan at all! That’s fine.
2. Record your poem. **Record in Mono** for this exercise. Leave this original recording of your poem, unaltered, as the top or bottom track in your file for **reference** only; this track will be **muted** for the actual sound composition. You can record directly in Audacity; for this project, you don’t need an external mic or audio interface; a built-in computer mic is fine.
3. Create your composition according to the parameters below. Explore and have fun!
4. Complete the self-assessment/write-up.

Parameters

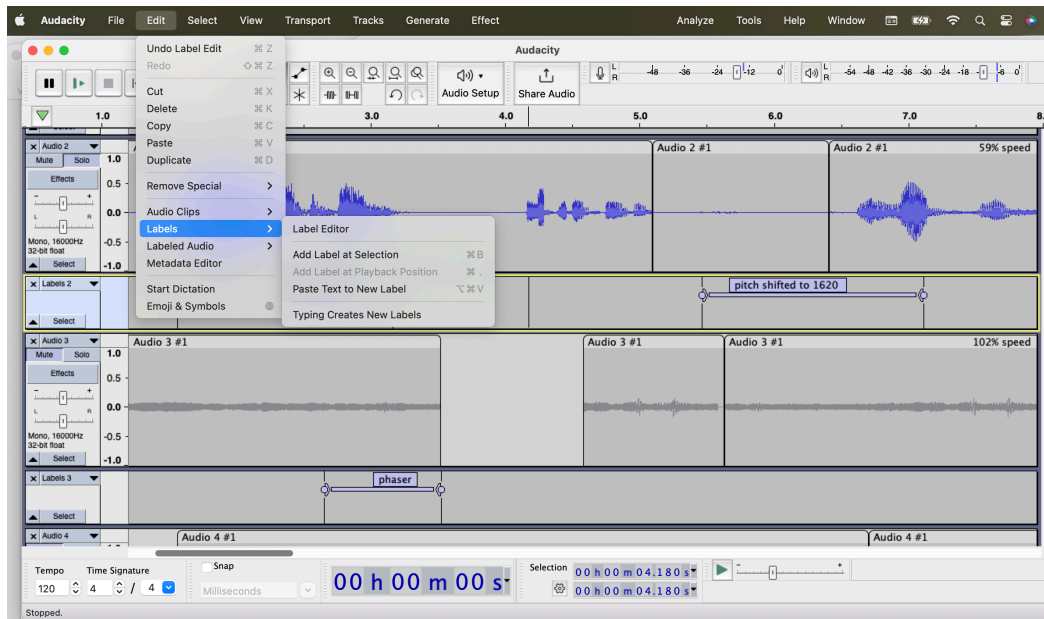
1. **2-20 sounding tracks (i.e. not counting the muted source track).**
2. **Your recorded voice only**, always based on the poem text. **No other sounds**, whether recorded or software-based. That said, you are free to manipulate the vocal audio in any way and to any degree, such as turning a consonant or syllable into a rhythmic pattern or loop, for example, or changing the speed until it becomes a blur or a drone.
3. Record your voice in mono, but mix your piece for stereo by controlling the panning for each track. TIP: record on the slow side (this will make it easier to splice specific words and phonemes) and expressively.
4. **Move beyond a straightforward rendition of the poem.** Cut and paste words or parts of words and rearrange them anywhere in your new file. Rearrange words to shape the feel, the effect, or even change the meaning. Layer clips in multiple tracks to create a conversation or a collage of sound. Rearrange small bits of words to create new sounds. Process parts of the words to create an effect that you like. **Think of this as a sound composition based on a poem, not a straight reading.** Listen to the tape-era vocal compositions on the assignment webpage. Be creative! The options are endless.

Here are some things you can do:

- Split audio into clips
- Layer, using multiple tracks
You can then apply very different effects to different clips sequentially or simultaneously
You can create a conversation or a rich polyphonic texture, all from your original mono audio
- Move clips within or between tracks
- Cut, copy, and paste
- Use fades and crossfades between clips or between tracks to smooth transitions
- Adjust track volume and pan
- Time-shift (speed up or slow down) regions
- Pitch-shift regions
- Create loops of repeating words, phrases, or just isolated sounds
- Apply real-time (non-destructive) track effects (reverb, compression, pitch-change, etc.) via track plug-ins
- Apply rendered (destructive) effects on clips or regions via the Effect menu

Perform at least a dozen edits, and use **at least 6 different techniques** from the above list. Listen carefully to the results of each process; undo and redo until you like the sound.

Label each track, and in each instance describe clearly what effects you used.



Submission instructions

- Create a single folder with the name “First_Last” (where First is your first name and Last is your last name) that contains the following **three** files:
 1. your **pre-compositional worksheet** (Word or PDF files **only** please; no other formats)
 2. your **Audacity project file**
 3. your **post-compositional writeup/self-assessment** (Word or PDF **only** please)
- Go to our class Teams site, click on the **Files** tab, and put your single folder containing all four files in the folder **Project 1 – Magnetic Poetry**.

Pre-composition worksheet

Answer the following in writing **before** you edit your poetry project.

1. What is my poem? Include complete text and author.
2. What does the poem mean to me when read “normally”?
3. What is my plan for this project? What might the end result sound like? (**this may change**, which is OK)
4. What audio editing techniques, effects, or approaches can I use to achieve my goal?

Post-compositional writeup/self-assessment

Write a 1-2 page outlining your approach to your composition.

- Include a detailed list of the processes and effects you applied to each track or region.
- Discuss what did not work out as you hoped, and anything that worked out better than you planned or that surprised you in a good way.
- List anything you wish you had known how to do, or that this project makes you want to learn.

Assessment Rubric

pre-compositional worksheet (PDF or MS Word)	10
Audacity file uploaded according to instructions, on time	10
post-compositional assessment (PDF or MS Word)	10
at least 12 edits and 6 different techniques	10
total possible	40 points

