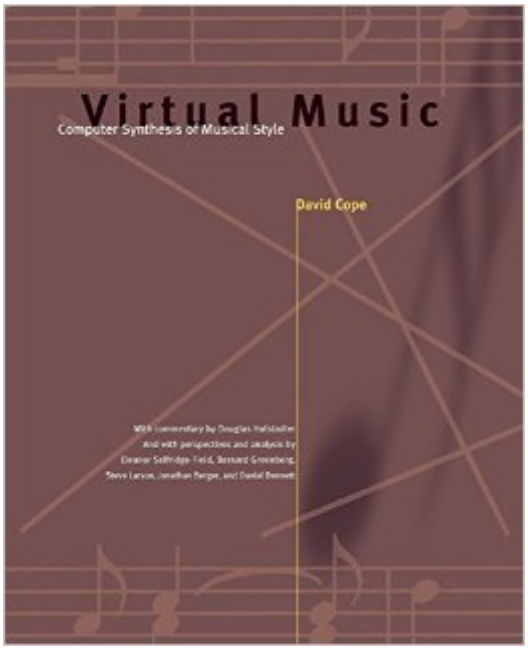
Virtual Music: Computer Synthesis Of Musical Style (MIT Press)



Synopsis

Virtual Music is about artificial creativity. Focusing on the author's Experiments in Musical Intelligence computer music composing program, the author and a distinguished group of experts discuss many of the issues surrounding the program, including artificial intelligence, music cognition, and aesthetics.The book is divided into four parts. The first part provides a historical background to Experiments in Musical Intelligence, including examples of historical antecedents, followed by an overview of the program by Douglas Hofstadter. The second part follows the composition of an Experiments in Musical Intelligence work, from the creation of a database to the completion of a new work in the style of Mozart. It includes, in sophisticated lay terms, relatively detailed explanations of how each step in the process contributes to the final composition. The third part consists of perspectives and analyses by Jonathan Berger, Daniel Dennett, Bernard Greenberg, Douglas R. Hofstadter, Steve Larson, and Eleanor Selfridge-Field. The fourth part presents the author's responses to these commentaries, as well as his thoughts on the implications of artificial creativity.The book (and corresponding Web site) includes an appendix providing extended musical examples referred to and discussed in the book, including composers such as Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Puccini, Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, Debussy, Bartok, and others. It is also accompanied by a CD containing performances of the music in the text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book gives a fascinating overview of machine music as seen through the eyes of the author, who has been actively involved in this field for many years. The reading of this book is recommended for anyone who is interested in the extent of machine musicianship and musical creativity. Not being an expert in music theory should not dissuade one from its perusal. In fact, not possessing extensive knowledge of musical theory may be an advantage, in that one can read the passages and listen to the musical compositions on the accompanying CD with minimal bias as to what constitutes enjoyable or "good" music. Indeed, if one were to approach musical listening, musical composition, and music theory from the standpoint of being exposed only to `virtual music', what would one then think of music composed solely by humans? Would one then judge "machine music" to be better than "human music"? As virtual music becomes more integrated into entire knowledge base of music, as it will in this century, there will be many who will be exposed to it more often than human-composed music. It will come to be accepted as beautiful music to listen to, and debates as to its "authenticity" will disappear. Even more interesting is the question as to what musical preferences the machines themselves will have. Will they debate among themselves about music theory and what constitutes compositional excellence? It will be interesting to see what kinds of music theory are generated (or preferred) by these machines, and if they are as biased to certain forms of music as their human musician counterparts frequently are.The author characterizes `virtual music' as being a category of machine-created composition that attempts to replicate the style of existing music.

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