Project 2: The Tongue Twister Tournament

Objectives
- Record a passage of a news show.
- Add music to introduce and finish the broadcast excerpt.
- Record a passage in segments, trim them, and join them together.

Class Time Required
You should be able to complete this lesson well in three 45 minute sessions.

Procedure

1. Create a folder in your Music Technology folder on your flash drive.

2. Launch Mixcraft 6. Give your project name the title of "YOUR NAME Beginning Middle End." In the Project Folder slot, hit the choose button and select the pathway to the file for your project. Then select Record Yourself or your Band from the New Project screen. You will see that you are given a template with eight Audio tracks. You only need one Audio track for this project, so you can delete the others. Select each one individually and click Track > Delete Track. It's easier if you scroll down to the last track in the Sequencer and delete them from the bottom up.

   You will be adding an additional track or tracks of your choice to be used to create music for your broadcast. What type will depend on whether you are using loops (Audio Tracks), MIDI (Virtual Instrument Tracks) or acoustic instruments (Audio Tracks). You can do that by clicking Track > Add Track and then selecting either Audio Track or Virtual Instrument Track.

   If your timeline is in bars and beats, change it to minutes and seconds by clicking the Time button, which you'll find above the fader for the first track. Save your work so far. Remember to keep saving your work every few minutes as you work through this project.

3. You will be recording through a microphone, so if you are using speakers, make sure they are off, or you might inadvertently pick up the sound of the speakers while you're recording and create a feedback loop. You should use headphones to listed as you record this project.

   Attach your microphone to the input of your audio interface. Check the Sound Device tab of the File > Preferences screen to make sure that your audio interface is selected. In the title bar of the first track, click the down arrow to the right of the Arm button to make sure the correct channel is selected for your audio interface. Select Monitor Incoming Auido if you need to hear what you are recording through the headphones. This may cause some unfortunate delay between what you say into the microphone and what you hear, so it is probably best to leave the Monitor Incoming Audio option unchecked.

4. Arm Track 1. Speak into the microphone to make sure you are getting a strong signal. Watch the volume readout in the first track to make sure the computer is able to hear you well. If you are getting a very weak signal, you may need to turn up the gain on the microphone input on your audio interface. If your signal is too strong, you may have to lower the level. Be aware that your proximity to the microphone is also a contributing

factor to the strength of your sound. The microphone should be just a couple of inches from your mouth as you are speaking into it. Please note that it is never right to bang a microphone to see whether it's working. You can easily damage the microphone, headphones, speakers, and even your own hearing in this way.

5. Press the Record button and start reading from the beginning of the following passage. If you make a mistake, press Stop and then listen back to what you've recorded. Find a place in the recording where you can cut in (probably between sentences or at places where you breathe) and delete anything after the cut-off moment (where the mistake is).

    You can delete easily by right-clicking in the track at the point where you wish to make the cut, selecting Split from the drop-down menu, and then deleting the region after the cut. You can also hold the mouse over the top-right corner of the region (the cursor will change to a double-headed arrow) and then click and drag the mouse back to where you wish to make the cut.

    After you have made the cut, leave a couple of seconds of gap in the timeline, click in the track where you want to begin recording again, press Record, and then keep reading from the point at which you left off. Keep doing this until you have recorded the whole passage.

We interrupt this broadcast for some breaking news from the Tenth Annual Tongue-Tied Twister Club's Tongue Twister Tournament. The results are in. Competition was fierce this year, with a new champion crowned as the Supreme Winner of the Tongue-Tied Twister Club's Tongue Twister Cup. In third place this year was fan-favorite Fred Feather with his flawless rendition of "Red Leather Yellow Leather Red Leather Yellow Leather." Second place went to last year's winner, Peter Pepperpot, with his perfect performance of "Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers." Peter Pepperpot performed well again this year but was pipped at the post by newcomer Josie Moseby, with her outrageously rapid recital of "Moses supposes his toeses are roses, but Moses supposes erroneously, for Moses he knowses his toeses aren't roses, as Moses supposes his toeses to be!" Phew! Now back to the studio.

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6. Disarm the track. Press Rewind to Beginning and listen to what you have recorded. Click on the FX button beside the Arm button and add some effects to the channel. You might like to add in a compressor to smooth out the sound or perhaps a reverb. You might also like to add in the Acoustica EQ, which will give you more control over the EQ settings of your voice than the simple EQ in Mixcraft's Mixer tab.

7. Trim the beginning and end of your recording so there's about a half-second before and after your recorded voice. Hold your mouse over the beginning of the clip, near the top, until it looks like a double-headed arrow. Click and hold, and then you can drag the start of the clip left or right. Try to line up the beginning of your clip with the moment your voice starts to read. Trim the end of the clip the same way.

8. Move the first clipe close to the beginning of the track by dragging the region name. Leave a couple of seconds at the beginning. Drag the second clip to the end of the first clip so that the beginning half-second of the second clip overlaps the last half-second of the first clip.

You may have to zoom in on the Sequencer window before doing this. You can zoom in and out easily by using the number pad +/- keys or by scrolling the mouse wheel up or down.

When you overlap the clips, you will see that Mixcraft draws a big X over the overlapping regions. This is a crossfade, and it ensures that there won't be a popping sound between the clips as they play back. Listen to your recording from the beginning and adjust the overlap until it's in exactly the right place. Attach the rest of the clips to their predecessors by overlapping and cross-fading.

When you are happy with all of the crossfades, select all the clips in the track by selecting the first region and then clicking Edit > Select All (or use the shortcut key combination CTRL+A). Now select Edit > Merge to New Clip (or use the shortcut key combination CTRL+W).

9. Now you are going to record some music for the beginning and end of your broadcast by using loops, MIDI, and/or acoustic instruments. (Many news broadcasts use snippets of pre-recorded music, so it's okay in this case to record something that somebody else composed.) Record a few seconds of music to introduce your broadcast.

10. Disarm the tracks used for the music when you are happy with your recording. Merge the tracks used for the beginning of your broadcast. Select the music track and then add some FX to it. Move the region in Track 1 so that the voice starts just as the music in Track 2 ends.

11. Select the newly recorded passage by clicking on its name and then copy it to the end of the track. Select Edit > Copy or press CTRL + C, scroll to the end of the track, click somewhere in Track 2 near the point at which the voice recording finishes, and select Edit>Paste or press CTRL+V. Listen to the end of the recording and move the music clip to a good place, so it starts just as the news bulletin ends.

12. If you wish, you can add a fade-in and/or a fade-out to the music recording. Click the Toggle Automation button to the left of the FX button of Track 2. Find a point at which you would like the music in Track 2 to begin to fade and click on the horizontal line you see going through Track 2. Click again at the point at which you would like to fade to end, hold the mouse button, and drag the point down. You will see you have created points on the line, and you now have a descending line between two of those points. This will fade out the music, just like you would do if you brought the fader in the Mixer tab down. Scroll to the end of the track and create a fade-in for the music and a fade-out for the music.

13. Listen to your work and check the levels of the voice and the music. The voice should always be audible, even when the music is playing. You can edit the level of each, either in the automation lane of by using the Mixer tab. You can also pan your voice and music recording slightly left and right - separating them slightly on either side of center is a good idea. Make sure nothing peaks into the red. (This should be second nature to you by now.) When you are satisfied that your recording is the best that it can be, mix it down to an MP3 using File > Mix Down To > MP3. Make sure to play your recording of "The Tongue Twister Tournament" for friends or family members to see whether they like it.

Extensions

Write your own script for another segment of the news broadcast, record it, and add music to it. You can put together a number of broadcast segments in Mixcraft to create a longer news show. Drag the mixed-down MP3s directly into the Mixcraft window, lay them end to end in the same track, and crossfade them.