

Richard Barrett

ON

2005-2011
ensemble -5 or more performers

performing score

ON

(2005-2011) for ensemble - 5 or more performers

Commissioned by the City of Liverpool as part of *CONSTRUCTION*

to the musicians of *ELISION*

duration: up to 20 minutes

ON is intended to function principally as the twentieth and final section of *CONSTRUCTION*, in which the ensemble collectively seeks a conclusion to the preceding 100 minutes of mostly precisely-precomposed music, a "way out" of the contradictions and confrontation of the previous nineteen sections.

It is thus an extended and unrestricted improvisation for the entire ensemble, given its unforeseeable musical identity by the experience of the preceding music and facilitated by a structural framework allowing for (but not prescribing) the free incorporation of recapitulatory material from earlier sections as well as providing a guide to the passage of time which might assist performers in pacing and structuring their contributions. The responsibility for deciding on the appropriateness of any contribution lies completely with the individual players, though it might be considered important to be constantly aware of whether and to what extent one's contribution can be affected by others (potentially or actually), and whether and to what extent one's contribution can affect others, particularly in the context of a contribution with a tendency to dominate, or on the other hand one with a tendency to disappear into an undifferentiated background. Each contribution is an act of "orchestration" as much as anything else.

The approximate timings of the twenty conducted cues are shown in the table below, reproducing the formal proportions of the entire *CONSTRUCTION* at a rate of about 10 seconds for each minute, though this is intended as a rough guide rather than a prescription, and the conductor may vary it spontaneously in response to musical events. On each cue the conductor should gradually bring his hands inwards from widely-spread to together over the course of between 5 and 30 seconds - the conductor may choose and vary the duration as he/she feels appropriate, though obviously some sections are extremely short and could be either entirely occupied by a "slower" cue or concluded by a very "quick" one. The conductor should also be able to make clear which cue is being given for any performers who have been following their own direction independently of the cued sections. Performers may also use a cue simply to coordinate beginnings or endings of or changes within their activity. The table also shows which of the preceding nineteen sections might be used by any player(s) as a starting-point for their improvisation, or a contrast to it or any other kind of relationship the player(s) might find appropriate. Obviously it will usually be found more practical to use materials in *ON* which one has learned and performed oneself in the preceding music, although this is not mandatory. It is also by no means mandatory, when using previously-played material, to use the same instrument it was originally scored for. The eventual network of sonic-structural relationships in *ON* will typically embrace responses in terms of both improvisational and precomposed material to both improvisational and precomposed music played by both oneself and by others.

The conductor may also take part in the improvisations so long as this does not conflict with the cues, and in particular, after the final cue when no more conducting will take place, it would be appropriate if practical for the conductor to join the ensemble both sonically and physically.

Versions of *ON* with shorter durations and smaller instrumentations may also be devised. The first performances, for example, had a duration of 3-4 minutes, used an ensemble of flute, two clarinets, trumpet, electric guitar, cello and electronics; the strings and winds had their respective parts from *heliocentric* (the sixth section of *CONSTRUCTION*) as basic material. In such versions the composition is of course not conditioned by the structural-expressive weight of 100 minutes of preceding music, but nevertheless opens unforeseeable possibilities for the notated material as "seeds" for spontaneous elaboration.

<u>section</u>	<u>start time</u>	<u>duration</u>	<u>material source</u>
1	0'00"	20"	<i>strange lines and distances</i>
2	0'20"	1'30"	<i>Politeia</i>
3	1'50"	40"	<i>Hekabe-alpha</i>
4	2'30"	20"	<i>wound 1</i>
5	2'50"	40"	<i>Kassandra</i>
6	3'30"	2'30"	<i>heliocentric</i>
7	6'00"	1'00"	<i>Omaggio a Chirico</i>
8	7'00"	40"	<i>Andromakhe</i>
9	7'40"	40"	<i>wound 2</i>
10	8'20"	1'10"	<i>news from nowhere</i>
11	9'30"	30"	<i>storming</i>
12	10'00"	40"	<i>Helene</i>
13	10'40"	50"	<i>wound 3</i>
14	11'30"	1'50"	<i>Island</i>
15	13'20"	1'50"	<i>Simorgh</i>
16	15'10"	30"	<i>wound 4</i>
17	15'40"	40"	<i>Hekabe-beta</i>
18	16'20"	10"	<i>wound 5</i>
19	16'30"	30"	<i>Germania</i>
20	17'00"	3'00"
end	20'00"		