

Richard Barrett

codex XII

2013

5 or more improvising musicians

performing score

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2013

for 5 or more improvising musicians

duration 10 minutes or more

Instrumentation is free as long as all notated pitches could be played by at least one instrument/voice, and as long as all instruments can play the A with which the pitched material ends.

The black triangles indicate approximately equal divisions of time, but this may be chosen freely prior to rehearsal depending on the desired overall duration. Since there are 120 divisions, a value of 5 seconds will give an overall duration of 10 minutes, 6 seconds will give 12 minutes, and so on. Once this is decided, timings may be placed in the score but used only as a rough guide. The first performance used a value of 8 seconds and thus an overall duration of 16 minutes, with the time-divisions and bars indicated by a visual metronome on a laptop screen.

The overall evolution of the composition should involve a gradual reduction in pitch-range, - the notated pitches are intended to be **points of reference** or **options** rather than obligatory (and should by no means be the only pitches played!), but some suggestions are given in the score below the timeline. The entry-point of each new pitch on each of the five numbered "parts" (each of which is defined by register and range) is indicated approximately relative to the aforementioned time-divisions. At the outset each player should be allocated one of the five parts for each "bar" so that there is always an approximately equal balance between instruments and parts, and so that each player uses as many of the five parts as his/her instrument(s)/voice allows. The reduction in the number of pitches in each bar doesn't imply that the music slows down but that the pitches used by the different players gradually converge on a smaller repertoire. The last bar is not intended to be literally "pitchless", although it could be, but rather a sudden dissolution of the increasingly concentrated pitch centres.

Beneath the timeline are four "tracks" labelled A, B, C and D, one or more of which (when simultaneous) may be used as guidance by performers. For example, at the beginning a player could choose to interpret track C or track D or both, or alternating between them, etc.; while at the end of the first bar the "loop" possibility is removed but the "free" possibility and the "solo" are added, and so on.

Track A: each of the five blocks marked SOLO should be allocated in advance to a single player, or to five different players, or any other combination. "Solo" isn't intended to mean "play in a particular way" but instead to indicate a particular kind of relationship between players, namely where the "soloist" plays freely without necessarily thinking about relating to the musical environment, while the "accompanists" relate more to the soloist than to each other by means of supportive or imitative, (or perhaps even disruptive) activity.

Track B: the "infinity" blocks indicate "free improvisation", that is to say most of the time one of the options (while retaining the shape of the composition!) is to disregard any or all of the other indications applying at any time. In bar 1, therefore, tracks C and/or D should not be ignored, and in bar 6 after the first three divisions the "solo" part and the pitch materials should be the only points of reference.

Track C contains three blocks which should trace a three-stage process between individual phrases, individual point-like sounds and synchronised bursts.

Track D contains brief indications of particular areas that might be concentrated on at the specified times. These are not intended to be part of a process like track C but instead to be "islands" of greater focus on the specified types of sound-material, which may of course be combined with indications from any of the other tracks and the notated pitches.

Codex XII is intended as an improvisatory piece, that is to say all of its indications should be reinterpreted *during* each performance, rather than fixed during rehearsals. The impression of a performance should be of a composition which is constantly varying in visibility, on many levels: between individual and collective, in terms of pitches and register (especially when the changes of "orchestration" occur at the beginning of each bar), solo/accompaniment relationships, coordination and textural focus.

Codex XII was written for and is dedicated to Ensemble Studio6, and first performed by them at KC Rex in Belgrade on 28 April 2013.

The performers were Karolina Bäter (recorder), Nenad Marković (trumpet), Vladimir Blagojević (accordion), Milana Zarić (harp), Ivana Grahovac (cello) and Richard Barrett (electronics).

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A

SOLO

SOLO

B

∞

C

individual bursts of activity centring on the pitch material, separated by silences, gradually tending towards shorter individual bursts of activity, in the form of variegated "points" separated by silences

shorter individual bursts of activity, in the form of variegated "points" separated by silences, sometimes synchronised between two or more players (making eye contact)

D

short "loops" repeating a few sounds, not necessarily regular

rapid "grace-note" formations

sudden changes of timbre

loud attacks

Musical score for three staves (2, 3, 4) and a timeline with markers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Staff 2 is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. Staff 3 is in treble clef. Staff 4 is in bass clef. The timeline below the staves has vertical tick marks and markers labeled 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

A SOLO SOLO SOLO

B ∞

C briefest possible bursts of activity, synchronised by cues from a chosen player every 1-6 seconds

D repeat single sounds at different speeds glissandi crescendo on each sound or sequence of sounds sustained sounds, maybe changing slightly during their course