Richard Barrett

codex XXII

2019

3 or more performers

performing score

codex XXII

(2019)
for 3 or more performers

for Angharad Davies, Rhodri Davies and Tim Parkinson
duration 7 minutes

The performing material for *codex XXII* consists of three elements:
(a) these instructions, which ideally shouldn't need to be referred to during performance
(b) the score
(c) an mp3 soundfile referred to as the *thread*, consisting of 4 seconds of silence followed by a continuous glissando (notated also in the score) which acts as a point of reference for most of the sounds that constitute the performance. The thread is not heard by the audience. Each performer has the thread on their mobile phone or other suitable device and hears it through an earphone. All performers begin the piece by starting the soundfile as nearly simultaneously as possible. The durations given for each glissando are a guide to their relative proportions.

All three parts in the score are to be played, each by one or more instruments. The only specification of the instruments is that they should all be able to play the entire range of the thread, from the B below middle C to the E on the third leger line above the treble stave.

The dynamic range of the music should be relatively restrained, between *ppp* and *mf*.

Each performer plays, as specified in the score, a sequence of *events*. An event consists of one or more sounds and may or may not end with a rest before the next event is played. The duration of an event (to include any rest) should mostly be between 1.5 and 9 seconds – longer durations will tend to occur in the longer segments (see below). Different types of events (see below) might or might not be treated as requiring durations at the lower or upper limits of the ongoing range. It isn't necessary for each event to be clearly delineated from the one before and/or the one after, although this will apply to some event-types more than others. (For example, a string of type 1 events might be equivalent to a single long type 1 event, while a type 2 event will typically include a more or less long silence after its single sound.)

Events are of six types which are referred to in the score by these numbers:
(1) one or more mostly brief (but perhaps sometimes long) sounds with intervening silences, all following the thread pitch as closely as possible, each as different as possible in dynamic, timbre, articulation and in the time-interval between it and the next sound
(2) a single accented sound, usually brief, on a pitch away from that of the thread (possibly outside the range of the entire thread), or unpitched
(3) a sequence of sounds with regular durations, beginning on the thread pitch and possibly then diverging from it, possibly in microtonal steps or in an interrupted glissando
(4) a phrase-like or melodic sequence of sounds, possibly *legato*, beginning on the thread pitch, succeeding pitches are free
(5) free choice of sounds, always bearing the musical context in mind
(6) a single sound, chosen freely by each performer in advance, unrelated to the thread, which is *always the same* whenever it is played

Each turning point in the thread involves a new specification of one or more event-types for each player. When more than one type is specified, the size of the encircled numbers indicate their relative prevalence. There are three sizes of number, so that where there are three numbers in all three sizes the relative prevalence of each type of event should be in an approximate ratio of 3:2:1, where there are two numbers with large and medium size it should be 3:2, where there's only one number only one type of event should occur, where there are several numbers of equal size the specified types should occur equally frequently, and so on. A dashed horizontal arrow indicates that the distribution of types in that given bar makes as gradual as possible a transition to the distribution in the following bar. Of course it isn't necessary for choices to be made according to a strict interpretation of these suggestions. The score is intended as a framework within which improvisation takes place. An imaginative and engaging result will involve seeing the score in terms of a proposal to make music together in a certain kind of way, rather than as a set of rules to be followed. The choice, timing, duration and separation (or not) of an event-type should be influenced at least as much by the ongoing musical situation as by any other factor.

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