Richard Barrett

codex XXVII

2026

for 2 no-input mixing boards
and 2 or more instrumentalists

performance score

codex XXVII

(2026) for 2 no-input mixing boards and 2 or more instrumentalists

for Bertram Wee and *Weird Aftertaste*

duration 16 minutes

The no-input mixing board players realise the composition *skew,* according to the timings in the score. *skew* was originally intended for a single player plus a recording of themself playing the same score, with the unpredictable convergences and divergences that this involves. However, as mentioned in that score, the recorded part could also be taken by a second player, which is how *codex XXVII* was conceived.

The instrumentalists may play any acoustic and/or electronic instruments (or may be vocalists). However, their performing materials are very different from those of the NIMBs and imply a more traditional kind of player-instrument relationship, where changes in any musical parameter (pitch, rhythm, dynamic, timbre…) are instantaneously and purposefully variable, in order to enable the production of sounds and sound-processes relating in specified ways to what the player hears.

In *codex XXVII,* the NIMB players should synchronise with the stopwatch and each other, and the instrumentalists should also have access to the stopwatch although their parts are not so strictly synchronised to it. *skew* consists of 36 structural elements (bars) between 4 and 72 seconds in duration (see score of *skew* which is attached after this one). The more or less unpredictable result of *skew* forms the basis for what the other instrumentalists do.

Both or all of the instrumentalists use the same score (below), which can be assembled into an instrumental part in any order (although all 15 must be used), and coordinated with the score of *skew* either in advance, by adding the numbers of the 15 structures to the score of *skew*, or (preferably) spontaneously in performance. The instrumentalists should in general not synchronise their structures, but each should create their own sequence, preferably different for each performance, so that they are encouraged to take more sponteneous and risky decisions while playing: the recalcitrance of the NIMB should percolate through the instrumental activities so that the music retains a sense of uncertainty and openness to the revelatory possibilities of "human error": all of the suggestions to performers in the score of *skew* also apply to *codex XXVII*.

The entry points of the 15 structures should be coordinated with the structural divisions of *skew*. Each thus begins at one of the barlines in *skew*. The structure then continues until the instrumentalist decides, or has determined in advance, that the next one is to begin. This doesn't necessarily mean that the instrumentalist will be producing sound continuously from one entry to the next. They may interrupt their activity with silence, either coordinated or not with the other instrumentalist(s) or the NIMBs, or end the structure at some point before the next entry. Possibilities like this are implied, or not, by the descriptions of the structures below. Structures 1-4 are concerned with responding to the NIMBs, structures 5-8 with responding to the other instrumentalist(s), and structures 9-15 each with a particular focus to think of when improvising (these focal ideas relate to the categories of activity in *skew*).

structure 1 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from the NIMBs and then **intensify** it, by increasing your loudness or rapidity or noise content or complexity or widening pitch-intervals (if any) or any combination of these (or other such processes you might imagine)

structure 2 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from the NIMBs and then **de-intensify** it, by decreasing your loudness or rapidity or noise content or complexity or narrowing pitch-intervals (if any) or any combination of these (or other such processes you might imagine)

structure 3 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from the NIMBs and **freeze** it, by sustaining or looping it without any changes

structure 4 **react** to a sound or sequence you hear from the NIMBs by using a mixture of the above possibilities or other ways you might imagine of responding perceptibly to what you hear

structure 5 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from (one or more of) the other instrumentalist(s) and then **intensify** it, by increasing your loudness or rapidity or noise content or complexity or widening pitch-intervals (if any) or any combination of these (or other such processes you might imagine)

structure 6 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from (one or more of) the other instrumentalist(s) and then **de-intensify** it, by decreasing your loudness or rapidity or noise content or complexity or narrowing pitch-intervals (if any) or any combination of these (or other such processes you might imagine)

structure 7 imitate a sound or sequence you hear from (one or more of) the other instrumentalist(s) and **freeze** it, by sustaining or looping it without any changes

structure 8 **react** to a sound or sequence you hear from (one or more of) the other instrumentalist(s) by using a mixture of the above possibilities or other ways you might imagine of responding perceptibly to what you hear

structure 9 free improvisation focusing on **stasis**

structure 10 free improvisation focusing on **randomness**

structure 11 free improvisation focusing on **fracture** and discontinuity

structure 12 free improvisation focusing on **oscillation** between two or more sounds/pitches

structure 13 free improvisation focusing on **counterpoint** within your instrument or between it and one or more of the other performers

structure 14 free improvisation focusing on converging to a **unison** in some sense within your instrument or between it and one or more of the other performers

structure 15 free improvisation of any kind

skew

(2022) solo for no-input mixing board

for Andrew Leslie Hooker

duration: 16 minutes

"Skew lines" in geometry are straight lines which neither meet nor are parallel, and which therefore can only exist in three or more dimensions.

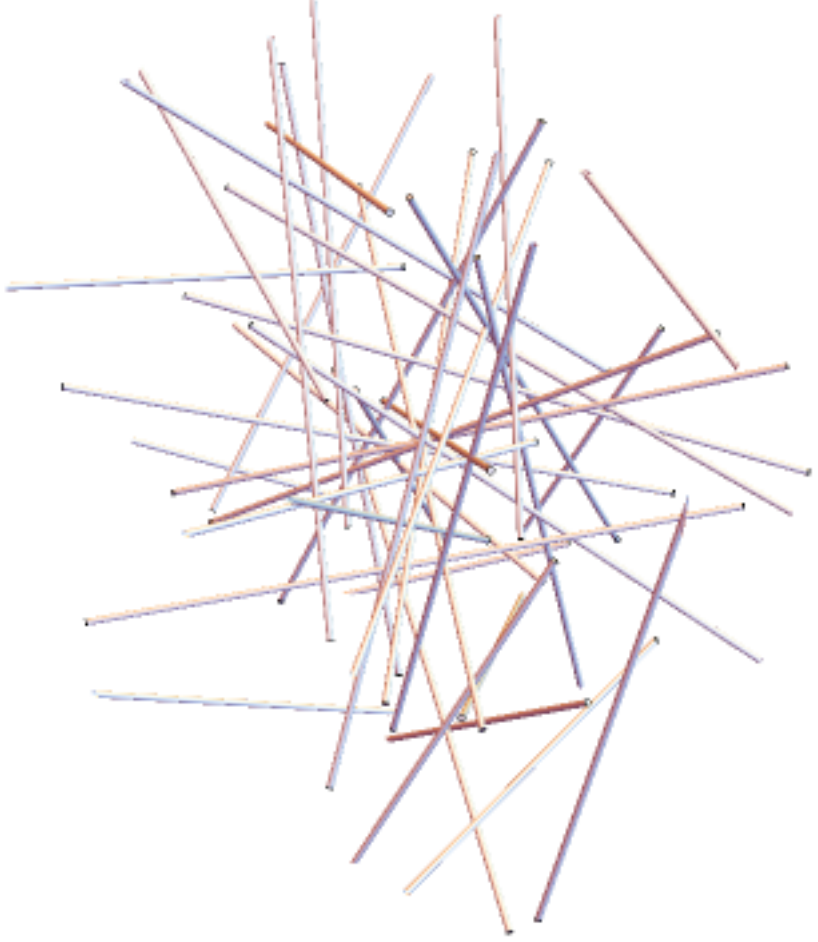
A performance of skew consists of a live realisation of the score **synchronised with a recorded realisation** (which of course will differ in very many ways, apart from the timing of events and changes). Preferably the recorded version will be made anew for each performance so that familiarity with it doesn't restrict the live performance. The score contains timings accurate to the second, although these may shift somewhat in the recording and/or live performance, as the performer responds both to the notated actions and to the sounds they generate. It would also be possible to perform *skew* as a duo for two no-input mixing boards with two live performers.

The no-input mixing board used in this composition is assumed to involve 8 or more channel faders, as well as various rotary pots for EQ and aux send/return levels, and channel mute buttons, with compression/limiting as appropriate. Outboard effects, MIDI controllers etc., may be added and incorporated into the actions proposed in the score, as desired.

Dynamics are not notated since variations in loudness will arise freely from combinations of the indicated actions. Adjustments (also to the level of the prerecorded layer) may be made as necessary, preferably being incorporated into those actions.

The score of skew consists principally of suggestions for different types and densities of performative activity, without specification of the sounding result. The composition differs from most no-input performances in two main respects: it involves more activity on the performer's part than usual, and it situates this activity within a precise system of temporal proportions. Both of these features of course diverge from the kind of approach taken by most NIMB exponents, who have been attracted to this instrument through its propensity to produce sound-forms that evolve in their own time, with intervention from the performer that is to a significant extent reactive, and often kept to a minimum. The actions proposed by this score are intended to act as a catalyst for sound-forms that might not otherwise (in the absence of the score) be called forth, which of course could be described as the function of any score, while here the actions are intended to respect the distinctive nature of the instrument and its relation to the performer, who of course interprets the score in the light of their knowledge of and expertise on the instrument, and according to their individual musical personality and sonic preferences. The prerecorded part expresses a "path not taken" by the live performance, the result of more or less different spontaneous choices which have a more or less profound effect on the sonic evolution of the music.

The score consists of 36 bars with durations between 4 and 72 seconds. Each bar specifies a different kind of performative activity (including none) and its duration and starting time are indicated, and each is also assigned to one of eight categories of activity, which are named "opening", "unison", "counterpoint", "fracture", "oscillation", "response", "stasis" and "random", with respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 examples (variations) of each. Each bar then contains a combination of verbal and graphical suggestions. Graphic notation is kept to a minimum in order to minimise the risk of it being taken as more specific than it's actually intended to be. The ideal situation would be for the suggestions *within* each bar to be memorised, so that the timings and categories indicated *outside* the bars can act as a mnemonic during performance.



skew

Richard Barrett
2022

20" (duration of bar)
0:00 (elapsed time on stopwatch)
opening

bring volume gradually up from zero, while searching for a stable sound as a point of departure

4"
0:20
random I

rapid and random and short flicks of faders and pots into new positions – as many movements as possible within 4"!

start stopwatch and playback of prerecorded layer

3

18"
0:24
stasis I

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 2 to remain still or active

4

33"
0:42
counterpoint I

choose two faders, or two pots, or one of each, one for each hand, and follow the kinds of movements suggested by the graphic notation, with great variety of speed and range of movement, either over the entire range of the fader(s)/pot(s) or within freely chosen limits



(continue like this...)

(... find a suitable position to stop on!)

12"
1:15
stasis II

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 4 to remain still or active

6

64"
1:27
response I

move one fader or pot extremely slowly and tentatively until the sound changes appreciably, then choose another and follow the same procedure, and so on throughout the bar

7

6"
2:31
fracture I

choose two channel mute buttons, one for each hand, and open and close them in rapid, irregular and independent rhythm



5"
2:37
random II

rapid and random and short flicks of faders and pots into new positions – as many movements as possible within 5"!

24"
2:42
oscillation I

choose one fader and move it up and down through a restricted range at varying speed from slow "glissando" to rapid "vibrato", sometimes increasing the range but always returning



(continue...)

10

50"
3:06
response II

make a burst of rapid random movements of as many faders and pots as possible at the beginning of the bar, then very slowly adjust them one by one so as to gradually transform the sound into something else (from stable to unstable or vice versa, from pulsed to continuous or vice versa, etc.), often pausing between movements

9"
3:56
11 **random III**

rapid and random and short flicks of faders and pots into new positions, interspersed with random opening and closing of mute buttons – as many movements as possible within 9"!

61"
4:05
12 **counterpoint II**

choose two faders, or two pots, or one of each, one for each hand, and follow the kinds of movements suggested by the graphic notation, with great variety of speed and range of movement, either over the entire range of the fader(s)/pot(s) or within freely chosen limits



(continue...)

16"
5:06
13 **random IV**

choose one channel and move the fader rapidly and irregularly while pressing the channel mute button also rapidly and irregularly (don't synchronise hands!)



(continue...)

36"
5:22
unison I

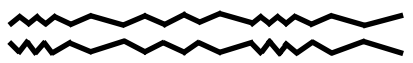
move ALL faders together gradually, from wherever they are, towards their maximum value, reached at the end of the bar

28"
5:58
15 **response III**

choose a fader or pot and move it very slowly in one direction or another, preferably so that gradual changes can only just be heard. (Perhaps nothing will change.) When the fader has reached its maximum or minimum value, choose another and do the same thing, sometimes more than one simultaneously, etc.

8"
6:26
oscillation II

choose two faders and move them in contrary motion each within its own restricted range



31"
6:34
17 **stasis III**

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 16 to remain still or active

26"
7:05
18 **random V**

choose 4 or 5 channel faders (for one hand), moving all of them constantly and as independently as possible not necessarily rapidly, while "playing" randomly on the mute buttons for these channels (with the other hand)

41"
7:31
19 **fracture II**

use both hands on chosen mute buttons in irregular, independent rhythms with wide variations, but often changing the button chosen for one hand or the other or both

4"
8:12
20 **oscillation III**

4 faders move rapidly in parallel over a wide range



38"
8:16
random VI

choose one channel for each hand, moving fader with thumb and operating mute button with index or other finger, occasionally changing channel operated by one hand or the other or both

7"
8:54
22 **stasis IV**

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 21 to remain still or active

10"
9:01
fracture III

choose four channel mute buttons, two for each hand, and open and close the pairs in rapid, irregular and independent rhythm

22"
9:11
24 **response IV**

make a burst of rapid random movements of as many faders and pots as possible at the beginning of the bar, then very slowly adjust them one by one so as to gradually transform the sound into something else (from stable to unstable or vice versa, from pulsed to continuous or vice versa, etc.), often pausing between movements

14"
9:33
oscillation IV

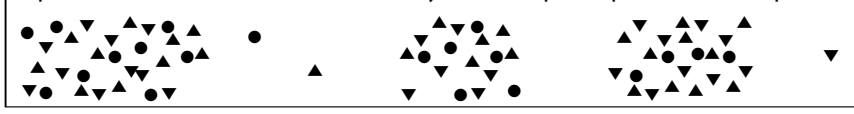
choose four faders, two for each hand, and make rapid oscillatory movements at different speeds, one hand at a time



(continue...)

54"
9:47
26 **random VII**

rapid and random and short "flicks" of as many faders and pots as possible into new positions, now with frequent irregular gaps where either no movements are made or density of movements is much lower



(continue...)

13"
10:41
27 **response V**

with one hand move a chosen fader or pot from its mimimum to maximum position or vice versa over the entire duration of the bar, while with the other making small, more rapid intermittent movements using as many as possible of the other faders and pots once each

47"
10:54
28 **stasis V**

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 27 to remain still or active

44"
11:41
29 **counterpoint III**

choose two faders, or two pots, or one of each, one for each hand, and follow the kinds of movements suggested by the graphic notation, with great variety of speed and range of movement, either over the entire range of the fader(s)/pot(s) or within freely chosen limits



(continue like this...)

(... find a suitable position to stop on!)

4"
12:25
30 **stasis VI**

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 29 to remain still or active

6"
12:29
response VI

make a burst of rapid random movements of as many faders and pots as possible at the beginning of the bar, then very slowly adjust them one by one so as to gradually transform the sound, as in previous instances but more quickly!

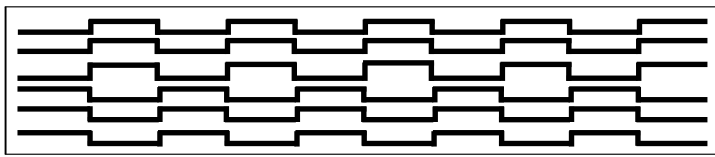
4"
12:35
fracture IV

choose two channel mute buttons, 3 or 4 for each hand, and open and close them in rapid, irregular and independent rhythm

72"
12:39
33 **random VIII**

mix freely and rapidly all of the actions suggested for random I-VII

57"
13:51
34 **oscillation V**



sparse but approximately regularly spaced, discontinuous and short movements with each hand on three of six chosen faders, occasionally changing the faders moved by one hand or the other

(continue...)

(... end with all or most faders at or near the top of their range)

4"
14:48
35 **unison II**

move all faders towards minimum value, reached at the end of the bar

68"
14:52
stasis VII

don't move anything! - allow the position at the end of bar 34 to remain still or active

end
16:00

(... cut off all sound abruptly)