

Richard Barrett

codex XXVI

2025

3-6 performers

performing score

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(2025)

for 3-6 performers

for ELISION

duration 12 minutes

instrumentation

All instruments/voices must be able to produce all pitches in systems 1-4 (the range is B3-D5). The score contains a version of the 4 systems at sounding pitch and a version for instruments sounding an octave lower (such as guitars). Appropriate transpositions may be added for clarinets, saxophones and other transposing instruments.

overall structure

All performers require a stopwatch. The composition consists of three “regions” with durations of 5, 4 and 3 minutes approximately. Performers make the transitions between regions individually at a point around the indicated time that they each find appropriate. Also, it isn’t necessary for everyone to begin and end exactly together. Improvisational considerations should always take priority.

Depending on the number of performers, the distribution of materials between them should be decided in advance. For region 1, each performer is allocated one system, so that all systems are as far as possible used an equal number of times. With 3 performers, the distribution can be 123, 124 or 234. With 4 performers, 1234. With 5 performers, 11234, 12234, 12334 or 12344. With 6, 112234, 112334, 112344, 122334, 122344 or 123344. For region 2, each performer is allocated two systems, using a similar principle, also ensuring that the two systems allocated to each performer are different from the one allocated to the same performer in region 1. For region 4, each performer is allocated all four systems. Combinations of two or four systems are read as single pitch sequences. Therefore, for example, if systems 1 and 2 are combined, the sequence is B F D# D G# G and so on.

Each performer’s musical material is divided between:

- (i) activity belonging to each region, which uses the four pitch systems in the ways indicated below, and
- (ii) activities A, B and C which can be inserted by each performer at any time, after which activity (i) continues from the point it had reached.

An approximately equal amount of time (around 6 minutes each!) should be spent on each of these two types of activity, and, within the second category, approximately equal amounts of time should be spent on A, B and C (thus around two minutes each). Any activity may consist wholly or partly of silence, more so when there are more performers. The intention is that the division of materials should be the result of spontaneous decisions in performance and not planned in advance. Decisions should be made with a view to encouraging the music to unfold in an engaging and not always predictable way, treating every action as an offer to one’s fellow performers, and treating everything one hears as an offer to respond creatively to.

During rehearsal, all participants should become sufficiently familiar with the possibilities of the composition that they are able to explore them freely and confidently, although some uncertainty is also not to be regarded as inappropriate. The score is intended not as a “restriction” on performers but as a way of channelling their individual and collective imagination by influencing it in the direction of discovery. It isn’t a notated score with “space for improvisation” but an improvisation with particular points of focus and (dis)orientation.

region 1 (starting around 0'00")

Starting at the beginning of their allocated system, each performer plays repeatedly through their 16 pitches (without octave transpositions!) and the "gaps" between them. Each "eighth note" and each gap (regardless of how many notes are "missing") has a duration of between 3 and 7 seconds. The specified pitches are sustained without any internal changes. The gaps may be occupied by silence and/or (one or more) freely chosen sounds which might be sculpted in various ways using glissando, varied articulation from staccatissimo to legato, chords or multiphonics, vibrato or trills or tremoli, or some combination of these or other possibilities. The unspecified sounds do not need to lie within the range of the specified pitches or indeed be clearly pitched at all. Each sound in either category should as far as possible be delineated from those preceding and following it in terms of dynamic and timbre.

region 2 (starting around 5'00")

As for region 1 except that the durations of specified pitches/unspecified sounds are now between 2 and 5 seconds, and now the specified pitches may also be modulated using glissandi, vibrato, different articulations etc. while still retaining their identity. In region 2 they may be freely and individually transposed by octaves up to the maximum extent allowed by the range of the instrument/voice.

region 3 (starting around 9'00", ending around 12'00")

Now the durations of sounds are between 1 and 3 seconds, and there are no gaps, so all performers are now using the same material going in and out of synchronisation with one another, *without* octave transpositions but *with* variations in articulation, timbre, and dynamic, and possible sculpting with glissando, ornamentation etc.

activity A

solo: free improvisation without any particular relation to what the other performers are doing (remember: the chosen duration doesn't need to be filled with sound – it could also be filled or almost filled with silence).

activity B

leading: make one or more visible "cues" with the instrument or a free hand or with a head movement, to which other performers may respond by synchronising their next sound (or silence) with the leader's cue. It isn't necessary for everyone always to respond to every cue, but everyone should respond to at least 50% of the cues that are made, and thus should always be alert to the possibility of using a cue to frame their own activity, by beginning or ending or changing it simultaneously with the cue. This applies to the leader also: their cue should be simultaneous with a beginning or ending or changing of something.

activity C

following: base what you do on something you can hear, by for example sustaining someone else's sound (with or without a gradual change in dynamic or some other parameter), or repeating it (regularly or irregularly, again with or without a gradual change in dynamic or some other parameter) or following one or more of the other performers in a close and perceptible way.

SOUNDING PITCHES

system 1

system 2

system 3

system 4

This musical score for 'SOUNDING PITCHES' consists of four systems of staves. Each system contains four staves, all using a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various musical symbols such as whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and accidentals (sharps and flats). The score is organized into measures by vertical bar lines, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of each system. The overall structure suggests a complex, multi-layered musical composition.

PITCHES FOR GUITAR(S)

system 1

system 2

system 3

system 4

This musical score for 'PITCHES FOR GUITAR(S)' consists of four systems of staves. Each system contains four staves, all using a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various musical symbols such as whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and accidentals (sharps and flats). The score is organized into measures by vertical bar lines, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of each system. The overall structure suggests a complex, multi-layered musical composition.