

some reasons for hesitating

was written for Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Montréal
first performance: Adelaide Festival of the Arts, March 2000

special thanks to
musicians Jesper Egelund, Jesper Juhl Sørensen, Signe Haugland and Kjell Åke Andersson for their time and
technical advice during the writing of this piece,
and of course to Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, for asking for it.

duration: 10½ minutes

notes on chronography and the coordination of parts

This music is necessarily to be rehearsed and performed without a conductor; there is no score, and no role for a central pulse-keeper. However, a non-playing leader is required for directing rehearsals (according to the plan suggested in 'notes to the musicians') - at first as coordinator, later as listener. This can be a conductor or (as in previous performances) the composer. Ideally, this person's importance will decrease throughout the rehearsals in an organic development towards the ensemble's unguided performance.

where metrically notated values apply, the speed is always ♩ = MM 60; otherwise approximate seconds-notation applies

respirazione personale/ tempo personale: follow seconds-timings/ metronome pulse with a small margin of independence from other parts, ie. interpersonal discrepancies in keeping the same pulse are appropriate and not to be avoided

cues:

most cues are very quiet, some mainly air-noise or *quasi inaudibile*, many *dal niente*, use visual cues (eye-contact, etc.) when sound is ambiguous - i.e. don't hesitate indefinitely waiting for a given cue to sound fully, consider the beginning of the attempt to play the note as the beginning of the cue. Where no such hierarchies are indicated, use the cued information for general, approximate orientation only, and place each entry on own initiative.

- ↓ (from cues-line to part): take cue from above instrument
- ↑ (from part to cues-line): give cue to the above instrument
- ↕ (↕) begin approximately together
- ↔ begin together and stay together
- ↕ → begin together and stay approximately together
- ↕ → begin approximately together and stay approximately together
- ↗ → look ahead to next cue; jump-cut ahead, or wait, as necessary

notes to the musicians

About rehearsing this piece: there exists no comprehensive score of *some reasons for hesitating*. It is a major point of the piece that there is no bird's-eye perspective of the ensemble, but that the musicians' parts are linked rather more personally. I created the piece in this way based on my experiences from three previous works which experimented with alternative ways of coordinating relatively large ensembles (ie. alternatives to the usual methods of common barlines, common pulse and metre, conducting, etc.), and devised the network of cues and arrow which I have used in this piece. The information given in the parts is sufficient for the kind of coordination I intend. I suggest the following schedule for rehearsing (based on the experience of the first performance):

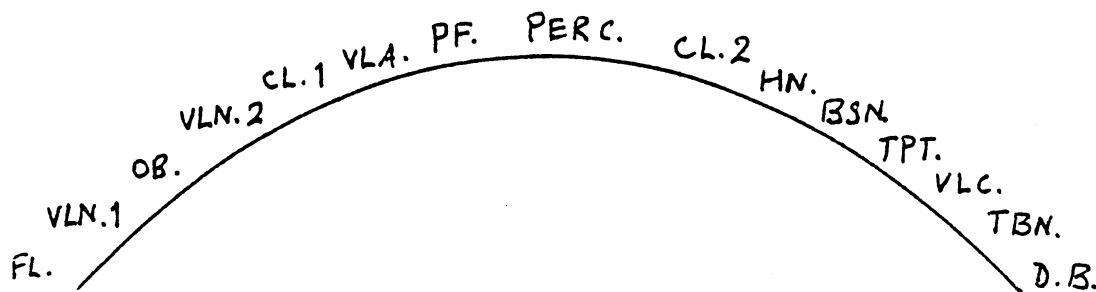
1. section-by-section (or even instrument-by-instrument) work on the timbres, special effects, fingerings, actual sound-production, without regard to timing or coordination. ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ hour per section)
2. coordination within each section (woodwinds; brass; keyboard and percussion; strings) and alignment of timbres of temporal coordination as far as possible.
3. *tutti* coordination of the whole piece, putting it all together (starting from the end of the piece, in half-minute or minute chunks, and working backwards). To achieve a first run-through, it is a good idea for the person directing the rehearsal to show each half-minute (cued from a stop-watch) irrespective of the inherent flexibility of the piece's timing. But after this run-through, such artificial means of coordination should be dropped. (Two $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 hour sessions, plus generalprobe).

use of notation

In performance, the use of notation should be as discrete as possible, or ideally dispensed with altogether. If used, stands should be tilted as horizontally as possible, so that the instrumental actions are clearly visible, both to all musicians and to the audience.

set-up

All musicians must be able to see one another; they should all be standing (the cellist on a podium). A semicircle is one solution; in this case, mix up the instrumental families (eg. left to right: flute, violin 1, oboe, violin 2, clarinet 1, viola, keyboard, percussion, clarinet 2, horn, bassoon, trumpet, cello, trombone, double bass). Make sure that the semicircle does not close in but opens out towards the audience, and that the arrangement of piano and percussion does not push all the other players out into two rows on the sides of the stage. A more radical solution would be to distribute the players around the auditorium (depending, of course, on the size, design, and acoustics of the venue).



notes to the concert-programmers and stage-manager

Please note the set-up of the piece, which entails a certain sensitivity to matters of spacing and lighting, to be negotiated with the musicians so that they are all visible to one another for cues.

programme note

The piece is held together not by the grid of vertical time-coordination (a common metre, common barlines) nor with the aid of a conductor, but by a network of interdependent local cues, such that the elements of each musician's part - fragmented and incoherent as they are in isolation - serve by design as points of departure for the other musicians' parts. So, the organising coherence of the whole is cut up into seemingly inert, formless elements containing on their own little information or meaning but gaining sense once put together. The lack of a common framework to hold the sounds and silences results in a particular kind of waiting, in which the silent musician is involved in the possibility that the end of that waiting may come a little unpredictably or unexpectedly. One benefit of this kind of communication between musicians is an increased intensity of pauses and waiting; one risk is the danger of missing a cue altogether. These phenomena are welcome as audible signs that (the) performance is a creative act, relating hearing and action in a fragile process which requires constant adjustments and readjustments.

flute (alto in G, and piccolo)



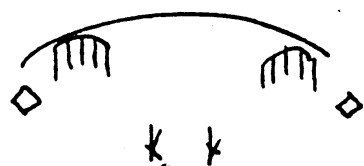
'spit' consonant into instrument; no pitch, no airstream



tongue-slap into the mouthpiece



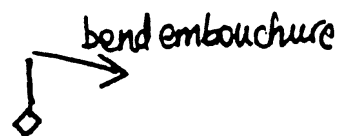
begin articulation of fluttertongue with instrument a small distance from mouthpiece and produce a *crescendo-decrescendo dal/ al niente* by bringing instrument and mouth closer together then apart again



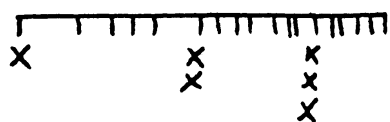
explore spectrum of whistletones based on the indicated note, according to the contours and ornamentation notated



tongue-slap giving pitch indicated (may have to finger a different note in order to get the notated pitch)



bend embouchure away from mouthpiece, causing relative fall in noise-pitch



key-tapping in the approximate density indicated;

x = tap one key;

x̄ = tap 2 or more keys;

x̄̄ = tap several keys noisily

x̄̄̄