

canons

/ James Saunders

/ 2021

**canon i (double basses)**  
**canon ii (guitars)**  
**canon iii (clarinets)**  
**canon iv (trumpets)**  
**canon v (pianos)**

## PROGRAMME NOTE

I've been fascinated by canons for a long time, mostly through listening to lots of Nancarrow. This set of pieces tries to extend how canons might operate by allowing players to intervene in the sequence of entries, disrupting the way the sounds unfold. The players have a common sequence of sounds, but may cue new points to begin, and other changes such as pausing, holding or repeating a sound. When making an intervention, the player doing so assumes a leadership role, with the other players following their decisions. Any player may intervene at any time.

## PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Each piece is for multiple instruments indicated by the title.

Any type of instrument in the named group is possible, but all players should play the same instrument. For example, clarinets could be Bb, bass clarinet, Eb etc; guitars could be steel string, classical, electric etc. Where there are major potential differences between these categories (e.g. types of electric guitar or electric piano), aim to get as similar a sound as possible.

Generally there should be at least four players, but more is possible with careful spacing and group negotiation.

Duration is free, but generally at least 8 minutes, or much longer.

Players play independently in canon, with one player electing to start, and the other players joining in freely afterwards spacing their entries so that no two players enter at the same time.

The instruction words for each piece indicate interventions that the players can make. Any player may say one of the instruction words out loud, and the group must follow this.

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| NUMBER   | A new sequence begins from the chosen numbered cue sound. The player giving the cue begins the sequence at this point, and the remaining players join in as before in canon.                   |
| HOLD     | All players hold or sustain the current sound they are playing. If the sound naturally decays, then hold it and wait. Players will be generally playing different sounds as they are in canon. |
| WAIT     | All players stop their current sound and wait in silence.  |
| REPEAT   | All players repeat their current sound, playing in the same manner as when playing the sequence of sounds.   |
| CONTINUE | This cue cancels HOLD, WAIT and CONTINUE cues. Players continue from where they were before the intervention   |
| SLIDE    | Make a glissando or other relevant slide between sounds. This cue cancels the JUMP cue.  |
| JUMP     | Jump between sounds. This cue cancels the SLIDE cue.   |

# canon i

/ multiple double basses

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o-pppp (-----)

Play pitches on any of the indicated strings.  
Finger pressure can vary from stopped to light harmonic.  
Decide on finger pressure before playing each pitch; do not change during a sounding pitch.  
\*for open strings, lightly touching close to the end of the string to partially damp

SLIDE  
JUMP

HOLD  
WAIT

CONTINUE

# canon ii

/ James Saunders  
/ 2021

/ for multiple guitars

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
6 3 6 4 5 6 5 6 6 3 5 1

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18  
5 1 4 1 4 1 2 4 4 5

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28  
3 4 5 2 6 3 6 5 6 2 4 2

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38  
2 2 5 2 3 4 1 2 1 3 3 1

play harmonics on any of the indicated strings.  
let ring.  
very slow.

REPEAT

WAIT

CONTINUE

# canon iii

/ James Saunders  
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/ multiple clarinets / Bb

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
15 16 17 18 19 20 21  
22 23 24 25 26 27 28

*o-pppp (-----)* *pp* *ppp (<>)* *o-pppp (-----)* *o-pppp (-----)* *o-pppp (-----)* *o-pppp (-----)*

*ppp (<>)* *pp* *pp* *o-pppp (-----)* *o-pppp (-----)* *ppp (<>)* *ppp (<>)*

*pp* *o-pppp (-----)* *pp* *o-pppp (-----)* *pp* *ppp (<>)* *pp*

*ppp (<>)* *o-pppp (-----)* *pp* *o-pppp (-----)* *ppp (<>)* *o-pppp (-----)* *ppp (<>)*

long sustained tones, with a break before each new tone.  
[M] are any possible quiet multiphonics based on this pitch

WAIT

HOLD

CONTINUE

# canon iv

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/ multiple trumpets / Bb / plunger

as quiet as possible, unstable.  
long sustained tones, with a break before each new tone.  
o open  
+ closed  
⊕ blocked [heavy pressure on plunger]  
---- small changes in mute pressure

WAIT

CONTINUE

# Canon V

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/ multiple pianos

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

*pppp*

*8vb.*

*8va.*

*8vb.*

*8va.*

*8vb.*

*8va.*

*8vb.*

*8va.*

*8vb.*

quiet, barely sounding.  
sustain pedal down throughout.

REPEAT WAIT CONTINUE